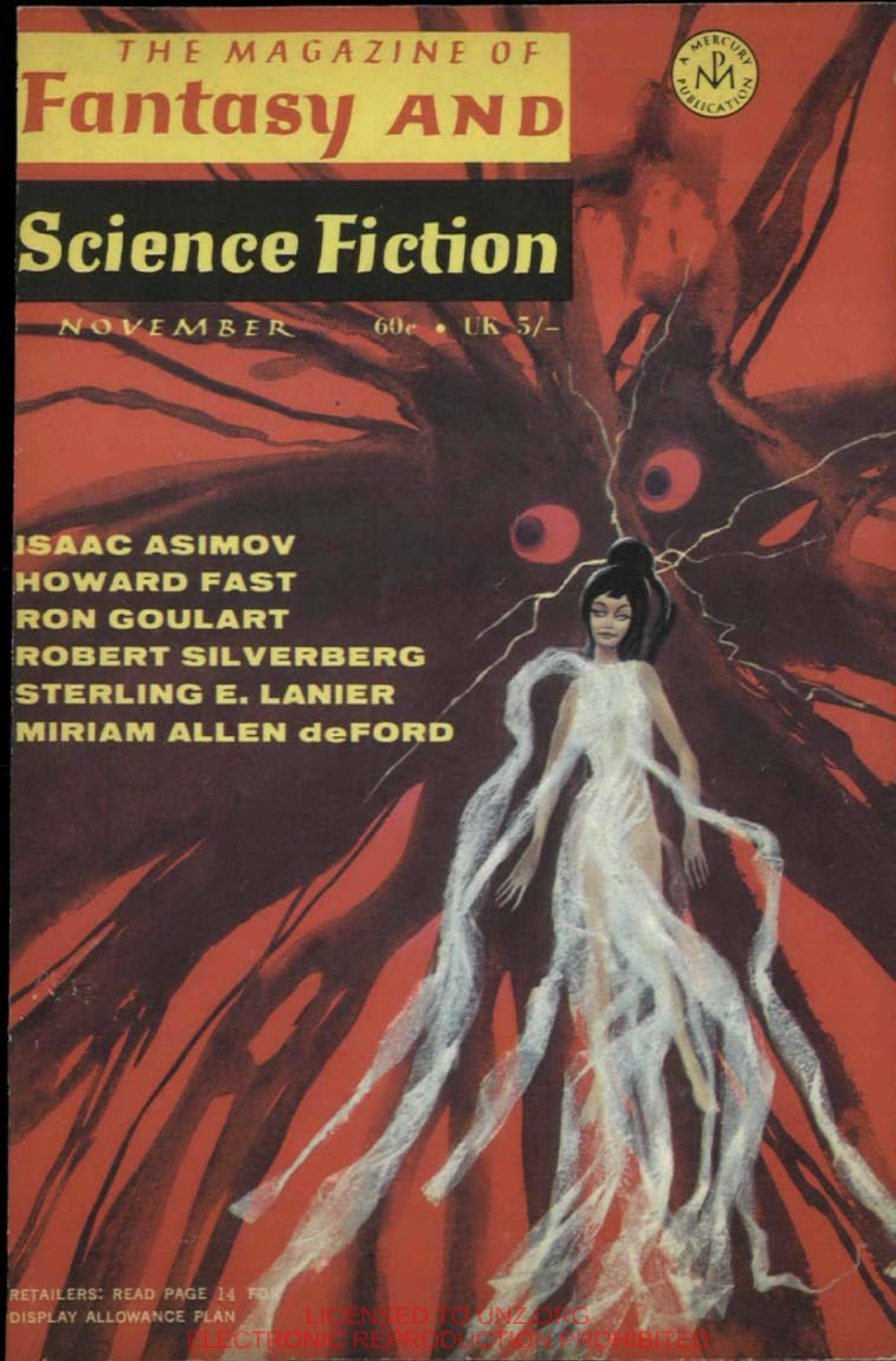

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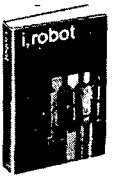

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Fantasy and Science Fiction

NOVEMBER

NOVELETS

A Feminine Jurisdiction	STERLING E. LANIER	15
Diaspora	ROBIN SCOTT	91

SHORT STORIES

The Mouse	HOWARD FAST	5
Penny Dreadful	RON GOULART	36
The Crib Circuit	MIRIAM ALLEN deFORD	52
Come Up And See Me Some Time	GILBERT THOMAS	68
After The Bomb Cliches	BRUCE MCALLISTER	76
After The Myths Went Home	ROBERT SILVERBERG	121

FEATURES

Cartoon	GAHAN WILSON	35
Books	ALEXEI PANSHIN	46
Science: The Sin Of The Scientist	ISAAC ASIMOV	81

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Howard Fast, the author of THE LAST FRONTIER, CITIZEN TOM PAINE *and* SPARTACUS, *among others, wrote several science fiction stories that were published here about ten years ago. His first SF tale in some time is a pointed and moving account of the strange relationship between a group of powerful aliens and one of Earth's smallest and most insignificant creatures.*

THE MOUSE

by Howard Fast

ONLY THE MOUSE WATCHED the flying saucer descend to earth. The mouse crouched apprehensively in a mole's hole, its tiny nose twitching, its every nerve quivering in fear and attention as it watched the beautiful golden thing make a landing.

The flying saucer—or circular spaceship, shaped roughly like a flattened, wide-brimmed hat—slid past the roof of the split-level suburban house, swam across the backyard and then settled into a tangle of ramblers, shivering a bit, somehow nestling down among the branches and leaves so that they covered it entirely. And since the flying saucer was only about thirty inches in diameter and no more than seven inches in height, the camouflage was accomplished rather easily.

It was just past three o'clock in the morning. The inhabitants of this house and of all the other houses in this particular suburban development slept or tossed in their beds and struggled with insomnia. The passage of the flying saucer was soundless and without odor, so no dog barked; only the mouse watched—and he watched without comprehension, even as he always watched, even as his existence was—without comprehension.

The flying saucer landed, covered itself, and then all was still, and what had just happened became vague and meaningless in the memory of the mouse—for he hardly had a memory at all. It might never have happened. Time went by, seconds, minutes, almost an hour, and then a light ap-

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peared in the tangle of briars and leaves where the saucer lay. Still frozen in his fear, the mouse fixed on the light, and then he saw two men appear, stepping out of the light, which was an opening into the saucer, onto the ground.

Or at least they appeared to be vaguely like creatures the mouse had seen that actually were men —except that they were only three inches tall and enclosed in spacesuits. If the mouse could have distinguished between the suit and what it contained and if the mouse's vision had been selective, he might have seen that under the transparent covering, the men from the saucer differed only in size from the men on earth—at least in general appearance. Yet in other ways they differed a great deal; and after they had stood in silence for about five minutes, they exchanged thoughts. They did not speak vocally, nor did their suits contain any sort of radio equipment; they were telepaths and they exchanged thoughts:

"The thing to keep in mind," said the first, "is that while our weight is so much less here than at home, we are still very, very heavy. And this ground is not very dense."

"No, it isn't is it? Are they all asleep?"

The first reached out. His mind became an electronic network that touched the minds of every living creature within a mile or so.

"Almost all of the people are asleep. Most of the animals appear to be nocturnal."

"Curious."

"No—not really. Most of the animals are undomesticated—small, wild creatures. Great fear —hunger and fear."

"Poor things."

"Yes—poor things, yet they manage to survive. That's quite a feat, under the noses of the people. Interesting people. Probe a bit."

The second man reached out with his mind and probed. His reaction might be translated as "Ugh!"

"Yes—yes, indeed. They think some horrible thoughts, don't they? I'm afraid I prefer the animals. There's one right up ahead of us. Wide awake and with nothing else in that tiny brain of his but fear. In fact, fear and hunger seem to add up to his total mental baggage. Not hate, no aggression."

"He's also quite small as things go on this planet," the second spaceman observed. "No larger than we are. You know, he might just do for us."

"He might," the first agreed.

With that, the two tiny men approached the mouse, which still crouched defensively in the mole-hole, only the tip of it's whiskered nose showing. The two men

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moved very slowly and carefully, choosing their steps with great deliberation. One of them suddenly sank almost to his knees in a little bit of earth, and after that they attempted to find footing on stones, pebbles, bits of wood. Evidently, their great weight made the hard, dry earth too soft for safety. Meanwhile, the mouse watched them, and when their direction became evident, the mouse attempted the convulsive action of escape.

But his muscles would not respond, and as panic seared his small brain, the first spaceman reached into the mouse's mind, soothing him, calming him, finding the fear center and blocking it off with his own thoughts and then electronically shifting the mouse's neuron paths to the pleasure centers of the tiny animal's brain. All this the spaceman did effortlessly and almost instantaneously, and the mouse relaxed, made squeaks of joy and gave up any attempt to escape. The second spaceman then broke the dirt away from the tunnel mouth, lifted the mouse with ease, holding him in his arms, and carried him back to the saucer. And the mouse lay there, relaxed and cooing with delight.

Two others, both women, were waiting in the saucer as the men came through the airlock, carrying the mouse. The women—evidently in tune with the men's thoughts—did not have to be told the facts. They had prepared what could only be an operating table, a flat panel of bright light overhead and a board of instruments alongside. The light made a square of brilliance in the darkened interior of the spaceship.

"I am sterile," the first woman informed the men, holding up hands encased in thin, transparent gloves, "so we can proceed immediately."

Like the men, the women's skin was yellow, not sallow but a bright, glowing lemon yellow, the hair rich orange. Out of their spacesuits, they would all be dressed more or less alike, barefoot and in shorts in the warm interior of the ship; nor did the women cover their well-formed breasts.

"I reached out," the second woman told them. "They're all asleep, but their minds!"

"We know," the men agreed.

"I rooted around—like a journey through a sewer. But I picked up a good deal. The animal is called a mouse. It is symbolically the smallest and most harmless of creatures, vegetarian, and hunted by practically everything else on this curious planet. Only its size accounts for its survival, and it's only skill is in concealment."

Meanwhile the two men had laid the mouse on the operating table, where it sprawled relaxed and squeaking contentment.

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While they went to change out of their spacesuits, the second woman filled a hypodermic instrument, inserted the needle near the base of the mouse's tail, and gently forced the fluid in. The mouse relaxed and became unconscious. Then the two women changed the animal's position, handling the—to them huge—mouse with ease and dispatch, as if it had almost no weight; and actually in terms of the gravitation they were built to contend with, it had almost no weight at all.

When the two men returned, they were dressed as were the women in shorts, and barefoot, with the same transparent gloves. The four of them then began to work together, quickly, expertly—evidently a team who had worked in this manner many times in the past. The mouse now lay upon its stomach, its feet spread. One man put a cone-shaped mask over its head and began the feeding of oxygen. The other man shaved the top of its head with an electric razor, while the two women began an operation which would remove the entire top of the mouse's skull. Working with great speed and skill, they incised the skin as necessary, and then using trephines that were armed with a sort of laser beam rather than a saw, they cut through the top of the skull, removed it, and handed it to one of the men who placed it in a pan that was filled with a glowing solution. The brain of the mouse was thus exposed. The two women then wheeled over a machine with a turret-top on a universal joint, lowered the top close to the exposed brain, and then pressed a button. About a hundred tiny wires emerged from the turret-top, and very fast, the women began to attach these wires to parts of the mouse's brain. The man who had been controlling the oxygen flow now brought over another machine, drew tubes out of it, and began a process of feeding fluid into the mouse's circulatory system, while the second man began to work on the skull section that was in the glowing solution.

The four of them worked steadily and apparently without fatigue. Outside, the night ended and the sun rose, and still the four space people worked on. At about noon, they finished the first part of their work and stood back from the table to observe and admire what they had done. The tiny brain of the mouse had been increased fivefold in size, and in shape and folds resembled a miniature human brain. Each of the four shared a feeling of great accomplishment, and they mingled their thoughts and praised each other, and then proceeded to complete the operation. The shape of the skull section that had been removed was now compatible

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with the changed brain, and when they replaced it upon the mouse's head, the only noticeable difference in the creature's appearance was a strange, high lump above his eyes. They sealed the breaks and joined the flesh with some sort of plastic, removed the tubes, inserted new tubes, and changed the deep unconsciousness of the mouse to a sort of deep sleep.

For the next five days, the mouse slept—but from deep, motionless sleep, its condition changed gradually, until on the fifth day it began to stir and move restlessly, and then on the sixth day it awakened. During these five days, it was fed intravenously, massaged constantly, and probed constantly and telepathically. The four space people took turns at entering its mind and feeding it information, and neuron by neuron, section by section, they programed its newly enlarged brain. They were very skilled at this. They gave the mouse background knowledge, understanding, language and self-comprehension. They fed it a vast amount of information, balanced the information with a philosophical comprehension of the universe and its meaning, left it as it had been emotionally, without aggression or hostility, but also without fear. When the mouse finally awakened, it knew what it was and how it had become what it was. It still remained a mouse, but in the enchanting wonder and majesty of its mind, it was like no other mouse that had ever lived on the planet Earth.

The four space people stood around the mouse as it awakened and watched it. They were pleased, and since much in their nature, especially in their emotional responses, was childlike and direct, they could not help showing their pleasure and smiling at the mouse. Their thoughts were in the nature of a welcome, and all the mind of the mouse could express was gratitude. The mouse came to its feet, stood on the floor where it had lain, faced each of them in turn, and then wept inwardly at the fact of its existence. Then the mouse was hungry, and they gave it food. Then the mouse asked the basic, inevitable question:

"Why?"

"Because we need your help."

"How can I help you when your own wisdom and power is apparently without measure?"

The first spaceman explained. They were explorers, cartographers, surveyors—and behind them, light-years away, was their home planet, a gigantic ball the size of our planet Jupiter. Thus their small size, their incredible density. Weighing on Earth only a fraction of what they weighed at home, they nevertheless weighed more than any earth

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creature their size—so much more that they walked on Earth in dire peril of sinking out of sight. It was quite true that they could go anywhere in their spacecraft, but to get all the information they required, they would have to leave it—they would have to venture forth on foot. Thus the mouse would be their eyes and their feet.

"And for this a mouse!" the mouse exclaimed. "Why? I am the smallest, the most defenseless of creatures."

"Not any longer," they assured him. "We ourselves carry no weapons, because we have our minds, and in that way your mind is like ours. You can enter the mind of any creature, a cat, a dog—even a man, stop the neuron paths to his hate and aggression centers, and you can do it with the speed of thought. You have the strongest of all weapons—the ability to make any living thing love you, and having that, you need nothing else."

Thus the mouse became a part of the little group of space people who measured, charted and examined the planet Earth. The mouse raced through the streets of a hundred cities, slipped in and out of hundreds of buildings, crouched in corners where he was privy to the discussions of people of power who ruled this part or that part of the planet Earth, and the space people listened with his ears, smelled with his sensitive nostrils and saw with his soft brown eyes. Safe in the spaceship, lying on his stomach and watching with simple yet enormous adoration the four people he loved so much, the four people who had given him the mind of a man and the personality of a saint, the mouse journeyed thousands of miles, across the seas and continents whose existence he had never even dreamed about. He listened to professors lecturing to auditoriums of college students, and he listened to the great symphony orchestras, the fine violinists and pianists. He watched mothers give birth to children and he listened to wars being planned and murders plotted. He saw weeping mourners watch the dead interred in the earth, and he trembled to the crashing sounds of huge assembly lines in monstrous factories. He hugged the earth as bullets whistled overhead, and he saw men slaughter each other for reasons so obscure that in their own minds there was only hate and fear.

As much as the space people, he was a stranger to the curious ways of mankind, and he listened to them speculate on the mindless, haphazard mixture of joy and horror that was mankind's civilization on the planet Earth.

Then, when their mission was almost completed, the mouse chose to ask them about their own

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place. He was able to weigh facts now and to measure possibilities and to grapple with uncertainties and to create his own abstractions; and so he thought, on one of those evenings when the warmth of the five little creatures filled the spaceship, when they sat and mingled thoughts and reactions in an interlocking of body and mind of which the mouse was a part, about the place where they had been born, and asked about it:

"Is it very beautiful?"

"It's a good place. Beautiful—and filled with music."

"You have no wars?"

"No."

"And no one kills for the pleasure of killing?"

"No."

"And your animals—things like myself?"

"They exist in their own ecology. We don't disturb it, and we don't kill them. We grow and we make the food we eat."

"And are there crimes like here—murder and assault and robbery?"

"Almost never."

And so it went, question and answer, while the mouse lay there in front of them, his strangely shaped head between his paws, his eyes fixed on the two men and the two women with worship and love; and then it came as he asked them:

"Will I be allowed to live with you—with the four of you? Perhaps to go on other missions with you? Your people are never cruel. You won't place me with the animals. You'll let me be with the people, won't you?"

They didn't answer. The mouse tried to reach into their minds, but he was still like a little child when it came to the game of telepathy, and their minds were shielded.

"Why?"

Still no response.

"Why?" he pleaded.

Then, from one of the women, "We were going to tell you soon. Not tonight, but soon. Now we must tell you. You can't come with us."

"Why?"

"For the plainest of reasons, dear friend. We are going home."

"Then let me go home with you. It's my home too—the beginning of all my thought and dreams and hope."

"We can't."

"Why?" the mouse pleaded. "Why?"

"Don't you understand? Our planet is the size of your planet Jupiter here in the Solar System. That is why we are so small in Earth terms—because our very atomic structure is different from yours. By the measure of weight they use here on Earth, I weigh almost a hundred kilograms, and you weigh less than an eighth of a kilogram, and yet we are almost

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the same size. If we were to bring you to our planet you would die the moment we reached its gravitational pull. You would be crushed so completely that all semblance of form in you would disappear. You can't ask us to destroy you."

"But you're so wise," the mouse protested. "You can do almost anything. Change me. Make me like yourselves."

"By your standards we're wise —" The space people were full of sadness. It permeated the room, and the mouse felt its desolation. "By our own standards, we have precious little wisdom. We can't make you like us. That is beyond any power we might dream of. We can't even undo what we have done, and now we realize what we have done."

"And what will you do with me?"

"The only thing we can do. Leave you here."

"Oh, no." The thought was a cry of agony.

"What else can we do?"

"Don't leave me here," the mouse begged them. "Anything—but don't leave me here. Let me make the journey with you, and then if I have to die, I will die."

"There is no journey as you see it," they explained. "Space is not an area for us. We can't make it comprehensible to you, only to tell you that it is an illusion. When we rise out of the Earth's atmosphere, we slip into a fold of space and emerge in our own planetary system. So it would not be a journey that you would make with us—only a step to your death."

"Then let me die with you," the mouse pleaded.

"No—you ask us to kill you. We can't."

"Yet you made me."

"We changed you. We made you grow in a certain way."

"Did I ask you to? Did you ask me? Did you ask me whether I wanted to be like this?"

"God help us, we didn't."

"Then what am I to do?"

"Live. That's all we can say. You must live."

"How? How can I live? A mouse hides in the grass and knows only two things—fear and hunger. It doesn't even know that it is, and of the vast lunatic world that surrounds it, it knows nothing. But you gave me the knowledge—"

"And we also gave you the means to defend yourself, so that you can live without fear."

"Why? Why should I live? Don't you understand that?"

"Because life is good and beautiful—and in itself the answer to all things."

"For me?" The mouse looked at them and begged them to look at him. "What do you see? I am a mouse. In all this world, there is no other creature like myself.

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Shall I go back to the mice?"

"Perhaps."

"And discuss philosophy with them? And open my mind to them? Or should I have intercourse with those poor, damned mindless creatures? What am I to do? You are wise. Tell me? Shall I be the stallion of the mouse world? Shall I store up riches in roots and bulbs? Tell me, tell me," he pleaded.

"We will talk about it again," the space people said. "Be with yourself for a while, and don't be afraid."

Then the mouse was by himself, and he lay with his head between his paws, and he thought about the way things were. And when the space people asked him where he wanted to be, he told them:

"Where you found me."

So once again the saucer settled by night into the backyard of the suburban split-level house. Once again the airlock opened there, and this time a mouse emerged. The mouse stood there, and the saucer rose out of the swirling dead leaves and spun away, a fleck of gold losing itself in the night. And the mouse stood there, facing its own eternity.

A cat, awakened by the movement among the leaves, came toward the mouse and then halted a few inches away when the tiny animal did not flee. The cat reached out a paw, and then the paw stopped. The cat struggled for control of its own body and then it fled, and still the mouse stood motionless. Then the mouse smelled the air, orientated himself and moved to the mouth of an old mole tunnel. From down below, from deep in the tunnel, came the warm, musky odor of mice. The mouse went down through the tunnel to the nest, where a male and a female mouse crouched in fear and regarded him with fear, and the mouse probed into their minds and found fear and hunger.

The mouse ran from the tunnel up to the open air, and then stood there, sobbing and panting. He turned his head up to the sky and reached out with his mind—but what he tried to reach was already a hundred light-years away.

"Why? Why?" the mouse sobbed to himself. "They are so good, so wise—why did they do it to me?"

He then moved toward the house. He had become an adept at entering houses, and only a steel vault would have defied him. He found his point of entry, and he slipped into the cellar of the house. His night vision was good, and this combined with his keen sense of smell enabled him to move swiftly and at will.

Moving through the shifting web of strong odors that marked any habitation of people, he isolated the sharp smell of old

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cheese, and he moved across the floor and under a staircase to where a mousetrap had been set. It was a primitive thing, a stirrup of hard wire bent back against the tension of a coil spring and held with a tiny latch. The bit of cheese was on the latch, and the lightest touch on the cheese would spring the trap.

Filled with pity for his own kind, their gentleness, their helplessness, their mindless hunger that led them into a trap so simple and unconcealed, the mouse felt a sudden sense of triumph, of ultimate knowledge. He knew now what the space people had known from the very beginning, that they had given him the ultimate gift of the universe—consciousness of his own being—and in the flash of that knowledge, the mouse knew all things and knew that all things were encompassed in consciousness. He saw the wholeness of the world and of all the worlds that ever were or would be, and he was without fear or loneliness.

In the morning, the man of the split-level suburban house went down into his cellar and let out a whoop of delight.

"Got it," he yelled up to his family. "I got the little bastard now."

But the man never really looked at anything, not at his wife, not at his kids, not at the world; and while he knew that the trap contained a dead mouse, he never even noticed that this mouse was somewhat different from other mice. Instead, he went out to the backyard, swung the dead mouse by his tail, and sent it flying into his neighbor's backyard.

"That'll give him something to think about," the man said, grinning.

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A FEMININE JURISDICTION

by Sterling E. Lanier

THE EVENING TALK IN THE club library had reached—or descended, it's all in the point of view—to the subject of women. Not sex. Older men are perfectly capable of discussing sex of course, but *women* are far more interesting to an experienced, intelligent man. Here we are, sharing the planet with what is another species really, and yet we still don't know how they think! Incredible!

The subdivision, you could call it, of the current conversation, was "executive women", or "business women"; but really what was meant was women running things that men normally do or holding jobs men have always held in the past.

Mason Williams was in his usual noisy, if not good, form. He told a long story about some woman in a brokerage office who had annoyed him by doing something or other she shouldn't. Williams is a bore and the story was both interminable and completely uninteresting. Several of us were openly yawning before it mercifully ended.

Yet oddly enough, the anecdote, dull and trite though it was, struck a response among a number of others present. A quiet guy

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named Callahan, a lawyer, spoke up quite vigorously for more women's rights and said that very few women ever got a decent break in any profession. I personally have always felt this was true in my business (I'm a retired banker), and chipped in a few examples of how I'd known capable women who got "new" titles and drastically lowered salaries to do exactly the same work as the men they were replacing.

Of the ten or so present we were finally all talked out on the subject. Except, that is, for Donald Ffellowes, our retired British brigadier. (He always corrected anyone who said "brigadier general".) There is no one more worth listening to on any subject. His commission was supposed to have been in the Royal Artillery, but his experiences ranged from the Colonial Police to MI-5 to the R.A.F. I mean he'd been *everywhere*. He had a liking for obsolete American slang, and he'd say "I've seen the elephant and heard the owl." A lot of his stories were absolutely wild and almost unbelievable.

A few anti-British types, like Mason Williams, said he was a liar and a fake, but I noticed they never left once he'd started talking or telling a story.

Anyway, he'd been sitting, saying nothing about women or anything else, and finally it became obvious that he was the only one who hadn't said anything. We sort of looked at him, and he suddenly looked up and blinked, as if he'd been a long way off, in time and space.

"Let us see," he said, "the subject was, or is, women as executives, eh? That is, women running things, and especially men —supervising men or ordering them about, as it were. Is that it? And you are good enough to ask my opinions on the matter?"

Williams mumbled something mostly inaudible in which I caught the word "Limeys", but no one paid any attention, especially Ffellowes. This annoyed Williams more than anything else, by the way.

"To be frank," said Ffellowes, "I feel that much of what has been said this evening rather begs the question, evades it, don't you know.

"You see," he went on, his ruddy, smooth-shaven face calm and reflective, "women are perfectly constructed, mentally, physically and spiritually for certain things. They possess, in my opinion— and that of others, such as Kipling—a quality of stark ruthlessness which is an outgrowth of the maternal defense mechanism."

He stared moodily at his Scotch and soda as if seeking inspiration, took a hearty gulp and continued.

"But constructive imagination on a large scale is perhaps not

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their long suit. They don't usually *innovate* well, and once they find a comfortable or accustomed pattern of living, they are very reluctant indeed to change it. Did any of you married chaps ever have an easy time getting the wife to move to another area?" (None of us knew whether Ffellowes himself was married, and no one liked to ask.)

As the benedicts grinned in response to his question, he took up the thread of his theory again.

"As I see it, then, one can't say women are suitable for this and that position, unless one knows both the woman concerned and the position concerned very well indeed. Some women such as Elizabeth the First and Catherine the Great of Russia have made admirable rulers. Still, I think a continuous matriarchy is not a good thing, really. It tends to, well, *freeze* in a mold, allowing no change to occur, and in nature, that sort of thing is quite unnatural."

He looked reflective again, and then said a funny thing.

"To make a very unpleasant pun, 'freeze' is exactly the word I wanted to use. Matriarchies are bad things in the long run, and when there is an element of something else added, the situation is compounded for the worse. Much the worse.

"Now I once encountered a situation of this sort. Would you like to hear a story?" He knew us all pretty well by now and didn't wait long before starting.

"In May of 1941, the Germans had completely overrun Greece. I had been sent over by Wavell's intelligence people—since I speak Demotic, or modern, Greek—to do a spot of resistance preparation. It was obvious to all of us, except Winston apparently, that we couldn't hold the Panzers back, even though we'd stripped North Africa to do it, and some far-sighted blokes decided to help set up a guerrilla network in advance.

"It was an excellent idea and we did good work. But the Jerries moved one hell of a lot faster than even the most pessimistic of us had thought possible. Instead of taking a leisurely departure through channels laid out in advance, I had to run like hell and trust to luck, if I weren't to be snaffled and stuck in some ghastly stalag.

"Well, I got to the coast and found the last of the Royal Navy had just left. With another chap, a Greek intelligence wallah whom we badly needed and whom I'd been guarding among other things, I located a small motor-driven caique, a Greek fishing boat, and we shoved off for Crete.

"I had kept a pretty useful radio with us, and I raised our people in Crete easily that night.

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They told us to keep off and as you say here 'get lost', because Student's crack *Fallschirm jager* division was dropping out of everyplace, and Crete itself was obviously a short hop from a total loss.

"I told our Greek crew, all three good men, and we took new bearings for the southeast. Perhaps we could work our way into the Sporades and Cyprus if our luck held. We had providentially put lots of fuel aboard and could go a long way, if at not too fast a pace. We wore Greek civies in the hope no Messerschmitt pilot would think us worth strafing.

"Our luck held exactly ten hours, and then a perfectly ghastly Aegean gale blew up out of Asia, driving at us from the northeast. We were somewhere north of Denusa and were driven southeast at a furious rate, really fighting to just stay afloat. This seemed to go on all night, but lasted about five hours, much of it spent under cold, salt water to one degree or another.

"Sometime around 6 AM, when the spume and murk were coming a bit alight, we hit something, a rock one supposes, very, very hard. The little caique, which had really behaved admirably, just burst asunder, and we were all in the sea in seconds.

"The three sailors must have drowned. At any rate, I'm sorry to say I never saw or heard of them again. God bless them, they did their level best for us.

"But my Greek officer and I survived, both, by chance seizing opposite ends of an empty wooden crate which had been lashed to the deck and which had come loose intact. The weather was so bad and black, spray and all, that it was quite a while before each of us saw that the other was hanging on to the same object.

"This seems as good a time as any to mention my charge, the Greek army captain. His name was Constantine Murusi, called Connie by everyone, and he was one of the really old and true *Greek* nobility, a descendant of the Phanariot princes who ruled the Balkans under the Turks for hundreds of years. A delightful man, humorous and charming, educated in France and spoke a dozen languages. He was steeped in the legends and history of Greece and could make its antiquity come alive for me as no professor ever did. The Greek army thought the world of him, and I'd been told by *my* chief to take very good care of him, since he was slated for high command in the near future.

"Well, I had not got him killed at this point, but that was about all that could be said for my care. We were unable to do much except cling to our crate, fortunately a sturdy one, and pray, as we were buffeted by spray and

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pounded by heavy seas. Little by little, the weather was lightening, and finally our range of vision allowed us to actually see one another clearly. Connie grinned at me and even managed to gesture in a feeble way, and I tried to smile back. The force was going out of the waves, but we were exhausted and very cold, and I knew that it was only a matter of time until I simply couldn't hang on any longer.

"Still, the light grew and the wind dropped and we somehow held on, aided by the fact that the crate was lower in the water, and we could rest our chests on it a bit, if we were careful.

"Suddenly, the clouds all vanished at once and there was the sparkling blue sea, only a bit choppy now, the bright blaze of the morning sun and, about a half of a mile off, an island.

"It must, I still feel, be one of the odd bits that lie in the triangle between Naxos, Ios and Amorgos. I am not really sure to this day, and I confess I have no intention of going back to find out. It was small and rocky, we could see that, you know, even low in the water as we were, perhaps a mile long, not more. There was a little cluster of white houses near the water's edge where a harbor opened and a larger building up on a cliff, some distance above. It looked like heaven, I can tell you.

"We began to kick and push our clumsy raft as hard as we were able. Neither of us dared swim for it—too tired for that, but we hoped to get ashore by floating. The current seemed to help, and we had actually got near to the harbor entrance, before a sign of life appeared.

"A small boat, rowed by two men, put out from the shore, and we were hauled out of the sea and carted to the beach. When the boat grounded, we tried to stand, but neither of us had the strength, and the boatmen, not roughly but not gently either, picked us up and dumped us on the sand. As we lay there, still panting, we got a most unpleasant shock.

"A sneering voice—sounds silly, but you *can* sneer verbally—said in excellent English, 'An obvious Englishman, probably a deserter, looks like a ragamuffin, and a piece of Greek offal who could be anything, so long as it were sufficiently unsavory. Not much of a catch.'

"I looked up and saw that we were lying at the feet of an immaculately uniformed German officer, wearing the black collar tabs of the Waffen SS and the insignia of a *Sturmbannführer,* which was equivalent to our major. A thoroughly nasty-looking piece of work he was, a thin, blue-eyed blond, narrow-headed to boot; could have passed for

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Heydrich's own brother. His only concession to actual war was that he wore a helmet rather than the uniform cap. He now holstered a huge Browning pistol, since we were obviously helpless, and ordered the two men to pick us up and bring us along. He spoke as good modern Greek as he did English, stilted by our standards, but good.

"One of the men answered, in a curious, slurred, singsong dialect, that the *Kyrios,* the lord, would be obeyed; and each one put a shoulder under one of ours and one of our arms around his neck. Half supported, half dragged, we were taken in a direction away from the cluster of houses and up a narrow and rocky path to the larger building I had seen earlier. It was quite a steep climb, and although the Nazi marched arrogantly along in front, never even turning around, our two supporters were soon panting. But they never said a word and gave us all the help they could.

"They were shortish, sturdy chaps, both quite young I should say, dark and heavy of feature. Their black eyes were not the usual animated Greek orbs however, but utterly blank, as if nothing at all interested them or ever would. Not *dead* precisely, but *dumb,* as in a dumb beast, such as a cow or better still, an ox.

"Eventually we reached the top of the path, and the building lay before us. There was a rather surprising garden, mostly tamarisk sorts of shrubs and low trees, but laid out well, and there were some very fine-looking marble statues here and there. Even in my depressed state I noticed one of an ancient Greek warrior in hoplite armor, which if genuine, ought to be priceless. The man had an arm raised to ward off some danger, and the horror and rage on the face were remarkably done, the work of some master equal to Phidias or Scopas at his best.

"The building was very large, not anywhere over two stories and most of it one, but long and sprawling. The base tier of stones was of huge marble blocks, and I saw at once that a great temple had surely stood here once upon a time. Some of the later work was good, some not, and various rough and smooth courses of stone had been added at different times. Everything not already of white marble had been whitened by stucco so that the surface effect was not inharmonious.

"And yet—the major impression was quite unpleasant. It was as if some vast, inchoate creature had built or accumulated a strange nest, or as if a cosmic whirlpool had gathered house materials and never let any one of them go. There was rather the same feeling I once got on contemplating an underwater cave

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in the South Pacific, where a large octopus had lived for a long time. There were all sorts of empty shells and fishbones around the cave's entrance and the feeling that something inside was patiently waiting. It was like that.

"Here, though, there was an added touch, and this was simply age. The great, rambling structure, patched and repaired, seemed immeasurably old, more like a piece of the island than something built upon it. The overall feelings induced, even in the glaring Aegean sunlight, were not particularly happy.

"I was brought sharply out of this semiconscious reverie by the Nazi, who had just ordered us dropped onto some turf in front of him. He was now sitting on a moss-covered marble bench and had taken his helmet off. Connie and I managed to sit up, but that was about all we were good for. The two Greek boatmen stood behind us in silence.

"The German stared at us for a moment and then surprised me. He extended a pack of cigarettes, produced from his uniform, and when we had each taken one, lit them for us. He also had some water brought in earthenware cups from a fountain nearby. He was no fool.

" 'Neither a Greek peasant nor the average Tommy as a rule wears gold seal rings, gentlemen,' he said, when we were all smoking. 'I am *Obersturmbannführer* Freiherr Klaus von Bruch-Wiletzki of the Waffen SS. I may as well tell you that at the moment I am the only German on the island. My plane, which was part of the invasion force of Crete, crashed, and I am the sole survivor.'

"I have always suspected personally he had the only parachute or something, but who can say?

" 'Now, gentlemen,' he went on, 'as you may or may not be aware, Crete has almost certainly fallen by now. The Axis forces will be all through these islands in a very short time. I suggest you cooperate fully with me, give me your names and ranks for a start, and we will try to live in a civilized manner until the time when you will have to be sent to a prison camp. What do you say?'

"Here was pretty solid truth, at least in most of what he said. These islands could not be held without air cover and the Germans did indeed end up roping them in before the end. I looked at Connie and he looked at me and shrugged. A German baron who was enough of a Nazi to be a field-grade SS officer must be an unpleasant customer, but he was telling the truth, and what could we do about it?

"Well, we gave him our names and ranks. He said, rather sur-

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prisingly for someone of that type, that since we were obviously not yet clearly behind German lines, the matter of uniforms would not be brought up, and they would be considered lost at sea. He may actually have grown tired of associating with the scum he normally commanded; I don't know.

" 'This is a strange island, Captain Ffellowes,' he said to me at length. 'I have been here now two days and living in the big house here as a guest. The family who owns it runs the whole place, almost one could say, owns it all, the people and every other thing. But so far as I can see, no other island people, not even local fisher folk come here. And look, we are high up. Can you see another island?'

"It was true. We were at one of the highest points on the island, and yet, looking about, nothing but empty sea could be discerned.

" 'By my last accurate calculations and those of my dead pilot,' von Bruch-Wiletzki went on, 'there should be many such islands nearby. Also, we crashed on a clear day. Suddenly came a mist out of nowhere and, since we were flying quite low when the engine suddenly failed, pfui, all was gone. Peculiar, *nicht wahr?*'

"Well, it *was* peculiar, but that was all one could say. An interruption of a quite different kind brought all three of us to our feet just then.

"Apparently out of nowhere, but actually from the strange building behind us, a girl seemed to have materialized.

"She was blonde and very pale, an incredibly rare thing for a Greek and quite beautiful in an indefinable and also non-Greek way. Her face was both round and rather flattened, so that except for her blue eyes, which were also very round, she looked something like a blonde Chinese. She wore a simple, white, flowing garment, rather archaic in cut, and sandals. I judged that she was about eighteen.

"She seemed amazed and yet very pleased at the sight of us. She clasped her hands together in delight and almost skipped with pleasure, the round eyes showing whites all the way around the irises.

" 'Two more and one fair skinned,' she cooed.

"I shouldn't have thought we looked that delightful, unshaven, coated with brine and dressed in water-soaked rags, but she did. Her voice was low and pleasant, but her Greek was simply amazing. It was nothing less than Attic, the ancient language of the classical period. It was highly inflected and singsong, which Demotic is not, but it was not at all the classic Greek that I had

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learned in school. It contained a number of modern or at least reasonably modern words, but its inflections made it hard, though not impossible for me to understand, and it was not the dead and arid thing one gets in school texts. Connie, who was a real scholar, perked up his head and bowed grandly.

"She looked at him with interest, but one could see there was a difference. The Nazi and I were blonds, and this was obviously more important to her.

" 'You are not the same as our folk,' she said to him, pointing to the two silent men, who still stood behind us, just as a horse might, fidgeting but patient. 'But you are more like them than these two. Perhaps once you were as they, or once they were as you. Who shall say?' She laughed, a pretty sound, but not exactly heartwarming after her strange little speech.

" 'But come, you two, I must take you in to see the—'

"She used a word I had never heard but which Connie later told me was a very ancient one, which meant something between 'relatives' and 'persons in authority.'

"Von Bruch-Wiletzki interrupted at this point. 'I shall accompany them, *Fraulein*,' he said ponderously. 'Pray precede us.'

"She looked at him for a moment and then shook her head. He was speaking Demotic, and apparently she could understand it just as he and I could understand Attic, but not speak it.

" 'They have seen you,' she said pleasantly. 'You will remain until I return.'

" 'I must insist,' he said harshly, and one hand moved to his pistol holster. Then a strange thing took place. He stopped moving. That was all. Hand still resting on the holster flap, head thrown back, staring at nothing now, for the girl had moved slightly, and the German simply froze, his mouth slightly open.

"Connie and I gaped at the girl, who still smiled pleasantly at us.

" 'Come,' she said. 'He is very impatient, your friend. He can wait here until we are through inside. He must learn patience. We do not like impatient people here.' She shook a finger at us in mock reproof, half a play, half admonition.

"We followed her up a broad but shallow flight of steps and entered a large open door. Just before going in, I looked back and there was the Nazi, hand on hip, staring at nothing. It was eerie.

"Inside it was cool and ought to have been refreshing, but it was not. Rather like the overdone air-conditioning one gets in so many shops over here, actually—all dank and chill. The room was large and dark, as indeed were all the rooms in this strange house, and any details were hard to make out. There seemed to be no win-

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dows and yet a dim, diffused light came in from some place or other.

"However, our guide beckoned us to another door, and we dutifully—and wearily, I may add—followed her through a succession of similar rooms. There seemed to be no halls, just large rooms, all tacked onto each other in the strangest way.

"Eventually, after passing through at least a dozen of these rooms, we came to an extra large one which seemed to have even worse light than usual. Across the far half of it there was a sort of vast hanging, of something thin and translucent, like fine linen. But it was ragged and not clean and looked more like a sort of grey dusty spider web grown much too large.

"There were two stools and a low round table set in front of the curtain. On the table was a jug of wine and some cups as well as a plate of some small cakes. The girl motioned to us to sit and then poured for us. When we had tasted the wine—very heavy, sweet stuff, but refreshing—she nodded and simply left us sitting there. We were hungry and pitched into the cakes, and the huge room was silent except for us crunching and sipping for some minutes.

"Then suddenly, we were aware that we were not alone. I stopped in the middle of a bite and looked up, and so did Connie. He told me later that he got the same feeling, just as suddenly as I, that of being observed.

"Behind the great dirty hanging, someone was moving in the gloom. Although only a vague shape or impression came through the dim, dark air and the filthy drape, I got the impression of a person of considerable bulk. A sudden dull crash indicated that something quite heavy had been knocked over, and a clumsy scraping sound followed. Then there was a heavy sigh and muffled sounds which seemed to indicate that someone was settling down.

"Then came the voice. It was slow, heavy and grating, most unpleasant to listen to, I do assure you. And there was a suggestion of size and loudness, deliberately muffled about it, too. But it was also *bleak* somehow and despairing. There was something hopeless and lost about it that would have aroused one's sympathy if the overall effect had not been so thoroughly ghastly. I can still hear it as I sit here.

"It spoke the same strange archaic Greek as had the girl, and like her's, it was perfectly intelligible, if one concentrated.

" 'Why have you come here? We seek no visitors, except once in a long, long while. The urge comes seldom. Keto, she who brought you here, was the last of the daughters for long, for many, many great tides. I say again, Strangers, what do you want?'

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"Well, d'you know, I could make nothing of this speech. It sounded like raving of some kind. I gathered only two things, one being that the girl's name was Keto, a pretty name I thought, and that the person addressing us was female. Somehow, under all the grating and rumbling, the tone was that of a woman, an extremely old woman at that. Apparently some half-demented matriarch, some Miss Faversham of the Cyclades was now interviewing us.

"Tired, dirty and now cold as well, because this last room was like an ice chest, I had no idea what to say or do. Connie though, was sitting bolt upright, staring fixedly at the dirty hanging and the shadows moving, or seeming to move, behind it. He spoke in answer and his classical Greek was really superb, although he didn't use the strange inflections these people did.

" 'I am sorry we may not see you, Lady,' he began. 'It is very dark in here and our eyes are used to the light. As for coming here, the sea brought us, and we are thus in the lap of the gods, castaways who ask protection.'

"There was a long silence, so long I thought the old creature must have gone to sleep. But the rasping, croaking, voice boomed from behind the curtain at last.

"Are you Greeks, Achaeans or other kinds?" it said.

" 'I am of Greek blood,' said Connie calmly. 'My companion is from the West, and the other man is a barbarian of the far North.'

"Again there was a long silence. Then the unpleasant voice did something even more unpleasant; it laughed. The noise sounded to me like a barrel of old nails and broken glass dropping on wet cement. Then again, more speech:

" 'The other one is cold, cold as the House of the Eye. He plots and schemes and listens and pries. He cannot find me and the other sister, and this makes him angry. And now a Greek has come and with him yet another from far away.'

"The voice died away for a moment, and I caught only the word 'dream.' Then it strengthened.

" 'Greek, you wish to see me. Well, perhaps you will later, although I do not love the light. Now go and let me be in peace.' Again there came that decidely nasty laughing noise. This was followed by a loud clatter and the sound of slow, heavy steps going away from us. We could hear them quite a long way off until they finally seemed to cease, lost in some far recess of this strange house.

"The light was good enough for me to see Connie clearly, although it was anything but bright. He was sitting, eyes shut, with his hands clenched on his knees, and his face was very pale and drawn. He seemed to open his eyes with

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an effort and looked at me and tried to smile, but it was not easy for him.

" 'Donald,' he said in a low voice and leaning over to tap my knee, 'we must get off this island at once. We are in terrible danger here, far worse than anything you possibly can imagine.'

" 'I thought the old lady sounded a bit bonkers, I agree,' I replied. 'But do you feel she's a menace? Let's not get the wind up.'

"I know this bit sounds very stuffy and British of me, but I was trying to put some starch back in Connie. He was badly shaken and I didn't like it. It didn't work, though.

" 'A bit bonkers, old lady,' he repeated in despairing tones. 'Damn you, Donald, you English idiot, did you see what the girl did to that German in the garden? The way he was made to stay put there? Well, did you?'

" 'Of course I did,' I answered. 'And a very useful bit of hypnotism, I thought. When we're rested up, we can get her to put him to sleep again, take his gun and do a bunk in one of the local boats. Now, Connie, do get hold of yourself, old chap. What we both need is some rest, that's all.'

" 'Some rest?' he almost wailed. 'Donald, you cretin, we have to get out of here at once. *At once,* do you hear me! The German is nothing compared to what lives here!'

"A voice from behind me stopped whatever I was going to say. I turned and saw the girl, standing smiling at the entrance to the room.

" 'Have you talked with Euryale?' she repeated, when she saw I hadn't heard her. 'Let us go then and see the other man, the impatient one.'

"Connie pushed past me, rather rudely as a matter of fact, before I could answer and faced the girl from a very short distance. He spoke in the old language.

" 'So you are Keto, eh, young lady? And the—the one whom we talked with was Euryale, then?' His voice was very gentle and low, as if he were anxious not to excite or annoy the girl.

" 'Then,' he continued still facing her, 'where is Stheno? Surely she dwells also in the House of the Eye, does she not?'

"Now I can, as I said earlier, understand slow-spoken classic Greek, but what this rigmarole meant escaped me completely. However, the girl answered quite calmly, as if it all made perfect sense to her.

" 'Of course,' she said, looking mildly at us. 'And they have always needed one daughter. Euryale comes *up* seldom and Stheno never, so I must see that the House is kept strong and safe and tell the folk in the village what to do and how to get food for us and themselves.

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" 'I wish,' she added slowly, 'that I had a sister, for it is often lonely. But that is for the Two to decide.'

"Connie backed up until he was close to me, as if he wanted to lean on me, as perhaps he did. I was feeling pretty chipper again, but he was a bit older and a rather thin chap. His reserves of energy were about gone.

" 'Come,' said Keto again, more abruptly, 'we will go out and find a place where you can rest. You seem tired and not strong. We do not like people who are not strong. It will be better for you if you are strong. You are not old or weakened by sickness, which is something we do not like either.'

"She turned on her heel, assuming we would follow, and we did, *in silence, back through that maze* and jumble of dark rooms until we left the portico and were once more standing outside in the garden with the sun on our heads and a soft breeze ruffling our hair. It now seemed very hot, but it was the effect of that dank and frigid pile of stone on our systems, for it was really a lovely day.

"Around a corner of the building, pacing fast, gun in hand, came the SS man, von Bruch-Wiletzki. He broke into a trot when he saw us, charged up and thrust that Browning practically up my left nostril. He was furious and his mean, narrow face was also frightened. There was no more 'cultivated-among-equals-of-good-birth-together' manner about him now, just suspicion and nastiness.

"He yelled in English, 'Where did she take you, Captain Ffellowes! Don't try to lie to me! I had an attack of dizziness, and when I came out from it, you and that Greek were gone! I demand to know what you have been doing! Remember, I am in charge here, and you two are nothing but my prisoners whom I can, and will, shoot out of hand if it should be necessary. Well?'

"I tried to at least appear calm. These Teuton hysterics are usually impressed by what they consider British phlegm, whether they admit it or not.

" 'Now see here,' I said, 'put that *pistol away and please do try to* be reasonable. We left you in the garden—I made no mention of *how* we had left him; if he was prepared to assume he had had a dizzy spell, that was his lookout —and were taken down to be interviewed by what must be one of the more unpleasant old ladies on record. She said a few words of dubious import from behind a dirty curtain and told us, in effect, to go away. That is absolutely and completely all, and now let's sit down and talk sensibly for a change.'

"His pistol drooped and he reholstered it grudgingly and then actually did sit down, on a bench

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where we joined him. Keto sat on the grass nearby looking happily at us, apparently not bothered by our use of another language, simply content to gaze on her new toys, or possibly playmates.

" '*Himmelherrgottkreuzen!*' suddenly burst out von Bruch-Wiletzki, 'This damned place is becoming intolerable. Every time I issue an order to this stupid girl, I find myself an hour later sitting staring at the ground. The only thing that she has done which I wished was to tell those two *untermensch* to row out and pick you up. I can't even find out what the name of this place is!' His voice had steadily risen until at the end it was almost a wail.

"I looked over at Connie in a questioning way, but he was staring at the German. He asked him a question and got a prompt answer.

" 'Yes, I talked with some old woman, some hag-like creature down in the dark,' he admitted. 'I could scarcely understand her, and when I shined my belt lamp,' he indicated a small torch clipped to his cross buckle, 'she had fled, vanished, and there was nothing behind the curtain but a hideous statue.'

" 'A statue?' breathed Connie, his face taut, 'a statue of what?'

" 'How do I know?' yelled von Bruch-Wiletzki, springing to his feet. 'Who cares anyway? A huge octopus with an awful sleeping face or something. I can't catalog these barbaric atrocities. It made me sick to look at it, with its shuttered eyes, so I called for the girl, this moron Keto, and demanded to be taken away.'

"He looked down at us angrily and then, apparently realizing that he needed us, tried to relax. He sat down again and almost visibly got a grip on himself.

" 'Listen, gentlemen,' he said, his voice trembling. 'This is a very remote island, wherever it is. Germany will absorb it in due course, but there may be a longish time before that happens. I admit it, we may be here quite a while. I find this situation intolerable, personally. I have things to do, important things, and I do not doubt, you have also.

" 'Therefore,' he went on, trying to be as persuasive as he could, 'I propose a temporary armistice. I could make you help me, but I will not. Two more Allied officers freed will not stop the Third Reich to any serious degree. Aid me in escaping and I swear to let you go, even to assist you to rejoin your forces, on the honor of a German officer. What do you say? Tell me you agree and we can develop a plan.'

"I looked at Connie and he looked at me and we read each other's minds. We could trust this bastard the distance of a mosquito's antenna, but we had better play along and see what developed.

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" 'Captain Murusi and I are agreeable, Major,' I said blandly —be damned if I'd use his idiotic SS title. 'We don't much care for this place either. Your offer sounds reasonable enough. What had you planned to do?'

"Well, while Keto smiled and gazed at us, like an ornithologist with three totally new species, all discovered together, we worked out a simple escape plan. It seemed that von Bruch-Wiletzki had been given a small ground-floor room on the far wing of the great sprawling house. He felt sure we would be given similar rooms near to or next to his. Although there were only very small windows, too small for a man to crawl through, the rooms had no doors and were really only cells or cubicles made of stone. There was an exit to the outside at the end of a short corridor, and at midnight—we all still had watches—we would rendezvous there and go down and simply steal a rowboat. There were several at the base of the path to the house, and no one seemed to guard them.

"To me it sounded rather too easy. I frankly had not cared a bit for our encounter with the old person inside, and I knew Connie was very upset indeed about the whole layout, although for some esoteric reason I couldn't fathom. The Nazi had the wind up worse than either one of us, although he was trying to pretend otherwise in the best *Herrenvolk* manner. I also felt sure that a German bullet in the back was our destined reward, as soon as he felt himself quite safe, and I knew Connie felt exactly the same.

"Nevertheless, we had little choice except to agree. The man was on the edge of a complete crackup and might have shot us on the spot. Whatever would have happened to him afterward, if Miss Keto had put him to sleep again would hardly have been of much concern to us.

"Connie turned to the young lady and asked very politely if we could be shown to our rooms. It was, indeed, by now late afternoon, and the sky was darkening rapidly, which made our request seem all the more sincere.

" 'Do you wish food brought to you?' she said a bit dubiously. 'For I wished you to eat in my company.'

"Connie was superb. I knew him well enough that I could tell if it gave him the absolute chills to even talk to her, but he concealed it awfully well. He told her that we wanted to rest and be on our top-hole best form to enjoy her ravishing company and a lot of bumph like that.

"Her reaction was curious, I thought, not that of a flattered woman at all, but a bit more like that of a child, who knows it's being put off but anticipates a treat in the near future anyway.

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Also as the light faded, her strange round eyes grew less attractive and rather, well, spectral.

"Von Bruch-Wiletzki was quite right. She showed us to rooms, or cubicles, next to his and drifted reluctantly and slowly away.

"A short time later one of the island men, older than the two we'd seen, but the same dull, vacant-eyed article, appeared with food. There was coarse bread and meat, some grapes and a jug of the sweet, heavy wine. Connie wouldn't touch the meat, seemingly some sort of local and very stringy goat, but not bad, so I ate his. He wouldn't say why at the time, only asked me not to eat it either, but I was hungry. I expected he was wrong anyway.

"There was no fish, which was odd for an island, but one can't worry about everything.

"Von Bruch-Wiletzki ate with us, but he actually didn't tuck much away, mostly fidgeted and looked at his watch and muttered to himself. Once he shot a question at Connie, something about the statue he'd seen, I believe, and Connie said, 'I knew the eyes were closed or you couldn't describe them,' whatever that meant.

"It was not exactly a cheery meal, but I felt better when I'd finished. Always grab a bite in a tight place, because you never know where the next nibble is.

"We decided to set, since it was now 6:30, three rough sentry go's until midnight. I had the first, and the other two went to their respective cubicles and tried to sleep on the pallets provided for them.

"I lay down on mine and tried to plan ahead a bit on how to deal with our German 'comrade.' I had not, you may have noticed, given *my* word to any agreement, and he was so obviously meditating treachery, he hadn't even asked it, which was a trifle silly of him if he expected to be believed.

"I hadn't much luck in thinking up any schemes, beyond grabbing a rock and blipping von Bruch-Wiletzki from behind. The atmosphere of the gloomy place, the House of the Eye, I suppose, whatever that meant, was not conducive to ordered thought. A soft wind moaned through the little narrow window and strange groaning and creaking noises echoed through the cold, dank air.

"I think the whole place must have been built over vast limestone caverns in the island's rock, caverns which allowed the sea to enter. Every so often a great muffled noise, something like a softened howl would come vibrating through the floor, almost shaking it with its sheer intensity. I am considered to be anything but oversensitive, and yet at times one was almost persuaded that one was hearing some monstrous and awful beast, whose feeding hour is overdue and whose bellow signals the rise of a titanic and rag-

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ing hunger. All this from the sea simply banging away at the ceiling of an underground and underwater, cave far below my feet. Shows you how wrought up I was, eh?

"It really was a most weird place, with the utterly dumb and peculiar servants or serfs or whatever and the two women, old and young, running everything and lurking in this vast mausoleum. I almost got up and woke Connie, because he at least seemed to have some idea of who these very odd people were, but decided to let him alone. He had the last watch, just before we left, and I thought he looked really done up.

"Eventually von Bruch-Wiletzki appeared from his cell and announced he would take his turn. But he told me in a nasty voice that he would take it in my company. I could sleep and he would wait for Murusi. 'I don't trust you two overmuch, Captain,' he said and tapped his pistol. 'We will wait together until midnight.'

"I was annoyed, but too tired to argue and fell asleep on my pallet almost at once. I needed rest and the Nazi problem could wait.

"I woke up suddenly to a crash and a thud. The SS man had been sitting on a low, wooden stool, the room's sole furniture, and must have nodded off. At any rate, as I blinked and stretched, I saw a grinning Connie tucking that very large pistol into *his* belt. He had waited, come around the door fast and dotted the German over the head with the stool from *his* cell. Von Bruch-Wiletzki lay on the floor, quite visible in that strange light, looking as if he were asleep. Well, let him answer the questions about where we had gone.

"There was no need for speech. My shoes were already on and we had never removed our clothes at all. We stole down the corridor, Connie in front with the gun, I carrying one of the stools. We could see moonlight coming in a door at the far end, and there was no sign of life or movement elsewhere, except for the subaqueous and subterranean roarings, which were both louder and more frequent. I thought to myself there must be quite a sea running.

"When we actually got out, we could see that a strong wind had come up and the sea was indeed rising. We were at an exit leading directly into the garden, and after a quick look around, we dashed off for the head of the path down to the beach. The shrubs and low trees were bending in the wind, and the moon gave strong but fitful illumination through a wrack of racing cloud.

"We had just reached the hoplite statue I mentioned earlier, and it looked very effective and alive in the moonlight, when the last sound I expected to hear broke on my ears. It was the snap of several bullets passing by! An accompany-

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ing burst of fire came from behind us.

"I threw myself flat instinctively, and saw Connie dive under a bush to the right. We wriggled around and got a look back at the building and saw we had made two cardinal errors.

"One was assuming that von Bruch-Wiletzki had only one weapon. He was staggering after us firing a Schmeisser machine-pistol in short bursts and screaming something in German, probably curses. The second error was not bashing his conk a bit harder, or at least tying him up.

"Connie sighted the Browning carefully and fired twice. One bullet must have been a near miss, and that was excellent shooting with a pistol, by the way, especially at night. Usually, a large rock is a far more reliable weapon. At any rate, von Bruch-Wiletzki also fell flat and got behind the base of a statue about a hundred feet off. He stopped firing, and a momentary quiet, broken only by the wind and the sound of waves far below, lay about us.

"But now the House of the Eye was roused. No light appeared, but suddenly Keto, in her white robe, her heavy blonde locks flying, appeared in a clear space not far from von Bruch-Wiletzki and a little behind him. She called out something, but he had either had enough or was rattled, and whipping around, shot her dead in her tracks, using at least six bullets. I was appalled, because strange though the girl may have been, she was unarmed and had done nothing to justify her cold-blooded murder, at least that I could see. Connie, I may add, later disagreed, but that is another matter.

"The German seemed a bit stunned by his own action and remained staring at the body, his back to us and resting on one knee. Connie motioned to me and we both got up and ran for the path like deer. We were running on turf and made no sound at all. I think we could have just gone racing on down, but at the head of the path something, some premonition or other, made us turn back and this is what we saw:

"Where von Bruch-Wiletzki had been standing, something had interposed itself between us and him. The moon was partly veiled and sight was difficult, but some great, dark bulk, whose upper parts seemed to writhe and be full of restless movement, had blocked off the light somehow so that the German was momentarily hidden. Whatever it was suddenly withdrew, lurching off to one side and at that precise moment the moon came from behind the clouds.

"What we both saw next made us tear down that path like Olympic sprinters. In seconds it seemed, we were in one of the little boats, each at an oar and rowing like hell for the harbor entrance. The

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waves were rising, but we fought our way out of the narrow entrance and pulled for the open sea like good ones.

"Despite the rest and grub, we'd been through a lot, you know, and as we passed the two little headlands which guarded the harbor, I began to slack off a bit on the oars. But Connie noticed at once and, thank goodness, was having none of it.

" 'Goddamnit, Donald, keep pulling!' he screamed over the rising wind. 'We aren't near being safe yet! Pull, for the love of your mother, pull!'

"Something about his manner, d'you know, made me tug a bit harder, and my idea that we could rest vanished.

"The wind was strong, but not near gale force, and the air was warm. The little boat was well shaped for riding the seas, and we took in hardly any water, but we were getting quite wet from the spray. Overhead the sky had grown darker and black clouds seemed to be increasing ahead of us, to what I assumed was North. Behind us not a light showed, and only an occasional gap in the clouds revealed the mass of the island. Now, in the clouds ahead, I could see lightning begin to play as I looked over my shoulder. The thought crossed my mind that we had come to the island in storm and in storm we were going forth.

"Connie, however, wasn't looking ahead at all. He was staring back at our stern and over it, as if determined to memorize every speck of wood on the square end. Suddenly he cried out sharply and stopped pulling. He pointed at the water some way astern, but I could see nothing except that an unusually large wave had broken at its crest, showing a splash of foam.

"Ahead of us, and now almost over us indeed, lightning bolts played down the sky. The moon had vanished behind the heavy cloud cover, and only the lightning gave any view of the tossing black waves and the foaming combers.

"At this time, new strength came to my arms. It may sound peculiar, and indeed downright mystical sitting here, but I felt as if I'd received a combination message and shot in the arm, so to speak. The message said 'Pull just a trifle harder and you're safe,' and the jolt seemed to give me the strength to do it. Connie was pulling like hell, too, and we simply tore through those waves, as if we were working up for Henley.

"Then it happened. Connie had never stopped watching the sea behind us, and he shipped his oar inboard in one easy motion. I was still pulling, but I stopped slack-jawed, and the boat poised on a tall wave crest.

"Illumined by a strong lightning flash, what Connie had seen emerged from the crest of the next

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big wave but one away from us."

Ffellowes was silent for a moment and seemed reluctant to continue, staring at the floor. Then he looked soberly at us and went on.

"I am not quite certain to this day exactly what it was I saw or what sensations I felt. Something enormous rose and broke the surface, something like a great rounded mass of long pieces of seaweed, many yards across in area. Only the separate seaweed fronds were *moving!* And under the weed mass I thought I could see two great round eyes, eyes which had their own luminescence and glowed under the water with a baleful light.

"At the same time, the strength left my hands, indeed left me completely. I simply sat, gaping at the thing which had arisen from the ocean depths to pull us down.

"Connie was made of sterner stuff. In the next flash of lightning, I saw him kneeling at the stern and the roar of the big Browning pistol blasted out over the noise of the storm. He emptied the magazine and then, he told me later, hurled the empty gun at the creature. Whether it did any good, we will never know.

"Because the next flash of lightning almost struck the boat. There was an ear-splitting crack of sound, a blinding glare and a sudden stink of ozone, all together, and just as suddenly the sea behind us was empty. Whatever it was had gone, and somehow one *knew* inside, that it had gone and that it would not, or better, could not, harm us again.

"Well, we started to row again. The storm died, the seas moderated and the stars came out, so we rowed northwest as well as we could. At dawn we were almost run down by a Turkish freighter, neutral of course, and in two weeks time we were back in Cairo. Turkey's 'neutrality' was useful. All in all a very peculiar experience.

"What had we seen on the island to make us run so? What happened to the German?

"Well, he's crouching still there, I expect. In that bright moonlight, he, his clothes and gun, everything in fact, had turned into nice white stone, probably marble. Very ornamental if you're in a mood to appreciate it. We weren't.

"I can still hear Connie's last words when we talked over what had happened.

" 'I don't think one pierces the barrier around that island very often, which is just as well. The Ancients,' he continued, 'made it very plain, that of the Three Sisters, Medusa was the only mortal.' " ◄

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The adventures of a free-lance writer might sound like pretty mild stuff, but Jose Silvera (who last appeared here in "Experiment In Autobiography," July 1966) is a writer who—incredible as it sounds—has trouble getting paid, and therein lie his adventures. Silvera's latest assignments include writing for the nude theatre on Tarragon and ghost writing dime novels for a poet-politician.

PENNY DREADFUL

by Ron Goulart

HE UNSEAMED HIS TROUSERS, removed them, and dropped them on the dusty prop table along with his shirt and tunic. Then Jose Silvera shrugged and twisted out of his all-season underwear. He'd been holding his shoulder holster in his teeth, and he strapped his blaster pistol back on now under his naked arm.

A stagehand near him lit a vegetable cigarette and asked, "You like working in allegories?"

Silvera grabbed up the pitchfork he'd borrowed out of the prop room and said, "They don't pay enough."

"Oh, really?" The stagehand's red eyebrows rose and arched. "One would think with nude theater such a fad here on Tarragon, and all the Barnum planets, there'd be big money in it. I know whenever we have naked actors here at the Picada Territory Rialto Playhouse, we're packed."

Silvera nodded and strode away barefooted toward the wings.

A naked blonde girl was standing just backstage, holding a clipboard and an electric pencil. "Who are you supposed to be?" she asked Silvera.

"The author," he said, shifting his grip on the pitchfork.

She ticked the pencil point down the sheet of paper on her clipboard. "The Green Knight, the Black Prince, Death, Satan, the Lady of the Lake, Plague, Pestilence, Sin, Redemption and Virtue. I don't see you listed here."

"I meant," said Silvera, "I wrote this play."

"You wrote *The Green Knight's Quest For The Holy Grail,* a Morality Play of the 15th Century Earth, by Sir Marcus Suckling? Oh, sure."

"I'm a freelance writer," explained Silvera.

The naked blonde looked at

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him thoroughly. "You're awfully big to be a writer. What does that Sir in front of your name mean, are you royalty?"

"I'm Jose Silvera. When Mother Jaybird needed an extra play for her extended tour of Tarragon, my agent fixed it up, and I wrote this thing. I was vacationing on your planet anyway."

"You'll like it here." The blonde girl scratched at the ribs on her left side. "A lot of tourists are scared off because our territory is having some kind of undeclared war with Oldfield Territory, and there are a lot of commandos and terrorists around. But we have more nice restaurants here in Picada than any other territory. You'll hear about us all over the Barnum System."

"I have." Silvera looked beyond the girl and out at the stage, where the second act of his play was going on. "You're not in this, are you?"

"No, I'm the prompter," answered the girl. "From those seats over there the audience can see me. They feel cheated if everybody in a naked allegory isn't naked."

A plump nude man with a goatee and a pitchfork joined them. "Excuse me. I'm on in a moment."

Silvera said, "No, you're not. I'm taking your place tonight."

"According to whom?" asked the man. "I'm Satan. I've got a run of the allegory contract with Mother Jaybird's Undressed Mystery Company."

"And I," said Silvera, unholstering his pistol, "have made three attempts in the last week to collect the $1000 still owed me for writing this thing. Tonight I'm going out there and collect from your treasurer."

"That's him playing Pestilence," murmured the plump Satan, backing off.

"I know."

"Well, we're both creative artists," said Satan. "So I'm in sympathy with you. Before we formed Naked Equity the pay was slow for us in the morality business, too. Go ahead. If Mother Jaybird asks, say I struggled and you knocked me down." He moved further off and sat on a folding chair.

Silvera walked out on to the stage.

" 'Tis the evil one himself," said Mother Jaybird, a tall broad-shouldered woman in her late fifties. She was holding a sword aloft. "Son of a bitch, it's Silvera."

"The devil has a multitude of names," said Silvera. He climbed up some prop rocks and caught the company treasurer by the elbow. "I want the $1000," he whispered.

"The fiend has me in his grip," said naked Pestilence. "I don't have it with me, obviously."

"We'll go get it out of your safe," said Silvera softly. "I found out from the bank you got your payroll cash today."

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"You'd deprive our players of their salaries?"

"Yes," said Silvera. "I've been a freelance writer for ten years and on fifteen planets, and the first rule I have is to always get paid for what I write." He pulled the lean dark man off balance and swung him up onto his shoulder.

"You're spoiling the play."

"Not this play."

Near the exit Mother Jaybird leaped into his path, waving her prop sword. "Halt, fiend, thou shall not make off with this poor wretch."

"Out of my way or I'll shoot you in the foot," Silvera said.

"At least keep in character," suggested the struggling Pestilence.

Mother Jaybird hesitated, then stepped aside. "I'm going to complain to the Authors' League," she called after Silvera.

The naked blonde prompter said, "You have a nice stage presence, Mr. Silvera."

"Thank you." He hustled the treasurer to his office.

Fully dressed, with $1000 in small bills in his breast pocket wallet, Silvera hailed the silver-plated landcar that was circling the block. The car, which was decorated with eagles and vines, stopped at his side and Silvera climbed in.

The willowy brunette behind the wheel asked, "Get it?"

Silvera buckled himself to the velvet passenger seat and gave the lovely young woman $100. "Yes. Here's your 10 percent, Jenny."

Jenny Jennings folded the crisp yellow and black bills over her forefinger. "Usually I don't think it's a good idea for my literary clients to deal directly with editors, especially when I'm on the planet myself on other business, as in this case. Still you're very effective at collecting, Joe."

"I don't like people who don't pay writers," said Silvera. "This is an uncertain enough profession as it is."

"Would you," said Silvera's current agent, "like to write some books?"

Silvera shrugged. "That's right, they still read books on Tarragon. What kind?"

"I'm taking you tonight to meet a man who wants three novels by next Friday."

"Three?"

"Can you turn out three that quick? Fifty thousand words each and you may have to do some research."

"Research for fiction?"

The slim girl swung the glistening landcar into an alley. There's a popular genre here. They call them dime novels, sometimes penny dreadfuls. Simple sort of adventure stuff."

"What research is involved?"

"You may have to go out into the wilds and live with some wolf herders for a day or two," said Jenny. She stopped the car under

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an awning, and a small android in a leprechaun suit ran up and opened the door.

"Top of the evening to you, ma'am. Miss Jennings, isn't it? Faith and I'd recognize that lovely face anywhere. Welcome to J. P. Newyork's Authentic Earth Pub. I speak for Mr. Newyork and meself, faith I do."

"Wolf herders?" Silvera unfastened himself and followed the girl toward the entrance of the night club. "Wait now. I know what you're trying to set up. You want me to write a godawful novel about Wolfpit Spanner. No, three godawful novels. They sell those things in the rail stations. *Wolfpit Spanner's Dangerous Leap;* or, *At The Mercy Of The Wolves* and *Wolfpit Spanner's Clever Hunch;* or, *Six Days Without Food.* No, Jenny." He reached for the copper door handle.

A chubby rumple-headed man fell out through the antique wood doorway. "This territory, to be sure, will never thrive without teleportation," the man shouted in a burred voice. He got to his feet and threw a punch at Silvera. "Pleased to meet you."

Silvera ducked to the left and caught the rumpled man by his shoulder. "Be calm."

The man noticed Jenny and, while regaining his balance, hopped over and kissed her. "You're even lovelier by moonlight, to be sure."

Silvera clamped a hand on the man's neck as Jenny cried out, "Joe, don't. He's our client."

"Am I now?" said the man. "Oh, yes, to be sure." He jabbed Silvera in the stomach. "Pleased to meet you, cobber. I've been campaigning and my faculties are, to be sure, just a wee bit clouded over."

"This is the guy who writes the Wolfpit Spanner novels?" asked Silvera. "This is Johnathan Knibbs Lovelock?"

"No, no. That is a pen name," said the man. "I'm Bugs Mainey, author, critic, poet and, more recently, politician." He narrowed one eye and stepped closer to Silvera. "I'd like to tell you about my rapid-transit plan for Picada Territory. Then I'd like to bust you in the snoot."

"Bugs," said Jenny. "This is Jose Silvera."

"Some kind of dago, is it?"

Jenny said quietly, "He's being playful, Joe. He's really very gifted."

"I noticed," said Silvera. "That voice he's putting on is very good."

"That it is, to be sure," admitted Mainey. "There's a wee bit of something about a pub that touches the Hibernian in me. I sense an ancestor in the dim halls of my past, a great Irish ancestor who stalked the remote wilds of Ireland on the planet Earth, clouting heads and lifting skirts."

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Mainey fell against the door behind him and beckoned them into the pub. "The patrons and the management have been having a devil of a good time propelling my carcass into the street, to be sure. 'Tis likely they'll refrain now I have this giant wop at me side."

The pub was all dark wood beams and sooty white-washed plaster. Low and dim, with lopsided checker-topped tables and bright ancient Earth coins and bottle ends embedded in walls and bar tops. An aproned android moved up to them. "No more talk of teleport depots, bucko, or out you go on your duffy yet again."

"I'm here to carry on a serious literary discussion with these friends of mine," Mainey told him. "Miss Jenny Jennings of the Wheatstraw/Jennings Literary Agency, home office Earth, and Mr. Jose Silvera, the well-known freelance author." He punched the android in the stomach. "Joe's the guy who wrote the bareass show at the Rialto."

"Right this way," said the android. "I've read several splendid reviews of your play in the local press, Mr. Silvera. Often there's a touch of provincialism in our critics, but I think in this instance they've come fairly close to comprehending your allegory."

"See," said Mainey, "he's a bit of a fake, too. Under the brogue, he's a pansy."

"Keep your vile tongue under control, laddiebuck," said the waiter. He seated them at a right-leaning table and left to draw three pints of ale.

"Well," said Mainey, "I understand you're ready to accept the mantle of Johnathan Knibbs Lovelock, Joe."

Silvera answered, "No."

"Joe," said his lovely brunette agent, "these three adventure novels will pay you $5000. They're easy to do, aren't they, Bugs?"

Mainey nodded. "Sure and they are. I've done twenty-six of the buggers in the past year. All simple and relaxing to write, except for *Wolfpit Spanner's Agrarian Gamble; or, Nearly Felled By Draught,* and that only took extra time because I had to look up some stuff about alfalfa." The android waiter set three copper-colored tankards on their table, and Mainey paid him with crisp cash drawn from a thick wolfskin wallet.

Silvera sampled his ale. "Why do you need somebody to ghost these three books now?"

"Bugs is running for Chief Selectman of Picada Territory," said Jenny. "It's the highest elected office you can get here. He's fallen behind his deadline and he wants to keep on giving all his time to campaigning. The election is next month."

"I have a dream of little green teleport stations blossoming all over the territory," said Mainey. "I

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also would like to keep my skin intact, and self-defense takes away from me writing time, too."

"Some commandos from Oldfield Territory are angry with Bugs," said the brunette agent. "He punched a few of them in the nose during one of their terrorist raids."

"They're led," explained Mainey, "these commandos, by a fellow named Merced K. A little chap with hair that's difficult to keep combed. He's a believer in the World Thug Movement. You've heard of them?"

"They want to strangle everybody," said Silvera.

"Right. And especially me." Mainey drank his pint of ale down. "So then, what with defending meself from assassins and running for selectman on the teleportation ticket, I have no bloody time for the Wolfpit books."

"How much are you keeping back out of the dough for these three novels?"

Jenny said, "Bugs is being very fair, Joe. You'll get $5000 and he keeps $5000."

"After all, it's my character," said Mainey. "My half will be sent to my campaign headquarters. When you deliver the finished books to the publisher's office, which is right here in town, they'll hand you your $5000. In cash, I'll arrange. You see, I trust you, Joe, to do a good job. I don't even want to read the damn books. And I'm letting you deal direct with me publisher. As fair as can be, to be sure."

"About the real Wolfpit Spanner," said Silvera. "Why exactly do I have to spend time with him."

"That," said Mainey, "is his idea. He wants you to get the feel of his personality. See, it was me turned him into a celebrity. I read of his wolf-trapping exploits, the other dangers he faced in the wilds of Picada, and I knew right off he'd make a good penny dreadful hero. I rushed and got him contracted before anyone else."

"$5000," repeated Silvera.

"To be sure. Look, I'll even provide you with a copy of my formula for writing them."

"I don't know," said Silvera, "if I want to spend time out in the wilds with a wolf trapper."

Mainey grinned and signaled for another ale. "Well, Joe, that you won't have to be doing. Since I talked to your lovely agent, I've found out that Wolfpit is going to be in the capital here this weekend. You can meet him and talk to him then."

"Why's he coming in out of the wilds?"

"At the last minute he's decided to put on one of his shows in the Picada Arena," said Mainey. "Very popular entertainment hereabouts. Wolf trapping, grout herding, trick shooting. I'll get you free tickets."

Silvera rested his chin on his fist for a second. "$5000," he said.

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"Okay, Jenny, sign. I'll do the books."

"That's fine, to be sure," said Mainey.

Wolfpit Spanner stood up in the saddle of his mount, uncoiled his rope, made a loop and tossed it at a passing grout. The grout is something like a horse, something like a cow. "Owee," cried Wolfpit, as his loop caught the galloping grout and he tightened it. He glanced over at Silvera. "You're doing very well for yourself, Joe."

Silvera leaped from the saddle of his white horse, grabbed the horns of the speckled grout he'd just roped, and threw the big animal gently down to the sawdust. He hobbled its six legs, stood, wiped his palms on his riding trousers. "I think I've got enough background material now, Wolfpit."

The wide trapper gave his own grout an extra toss and then trussed it up. He snatched off his high tan hat and waved it. The three thousand people in the arena audience cheered. "See that, Joe. You they only applauded. Me they cheer. It's my charisma. Can't help it. Had it since I was a boy. Go around setting off ovations wherever I roam. Figured out in the wilds I'd have myself some privacy. But no. Charisma started working even on the animals. Wolves especial. Something to see."

"They stood and cheered, too?"

Wolfpit gave one more wave with his hat. He was a large man, two hundred and fifty pounds. He wore his blond hair shoulder length and had a full moustache. His clothes were of white grout leather, trimmed with wolf fur. "Owee," he said. "You got a sense of humor like Bugs Mainey. I just know you'll do right by my saga." He leaped over the roped grout and added, "Lots of young ones read of my exploits, Joe. So I'd like you to keep them inspirational. You have much experience writing inspirational stuff?"

"I ghosted the memoirs of the Pope of Venus, three Martian gurus and the Archbishop of Murdstone," said Silvera. From the farthest entrance of the large circular arena a group of two dozen mounted men were entering.

Wolfpit's eyes were back on the stands. "Owee. Look at who's up there in the bleachers, will you."

"Who?" Silvera noticed the riders were dressed as Earth Indians and were carrying blaster rifles.

Wolfpit snatched his big hat off and waved it. "See the little guy in the blue shirt, wearing the crown? That's King Eddie. That dame next to him with the nice equipment is Queen Patsy."

"The king and queen of Picada Territory are up there in the bleacher seats?"

"Sure enough," said Wolfpit. "This is a democracy, despite what them radicals over in Oldfield Ter-

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ritory say, Joe. King Eddie and Queen Patsy are even going to throw a party for all the selectman candidates in a week or so."

Silvera reached under his tunic and drew out his pistol. "I don't remember Indians in the rehearsal, Wolfpit."

"Indians? No, we only put Indians in at the matinees because the kids like to see us kill them. Right now I'm supposed to go wrestle an eagle." He saw now what Silvera had been watching. "Owee. That's that crazed Oldfield commando leader, Merced K, and his cadre. Got themselves all disguised up as anachronistic Indians, Joe." He chuckled and whacked Silvera on the back. "You know what? They got this grudge against Bugs Mainey, and I bet they expected to find him here tonight, stead of you. Sometimes he takes part in my exhibitions, wearing the same kind of outfit I give you."

Sawdust began burning next to Silvera's left boot as a blaster rifle crackled. He jumped back, dropped down and rolled through the wood shavings. He circled in front of his mount, swung up into the saddle.

From another entrance a dozen of Wolfpit's fellow trappers came riding. They had been standing by waiting for the eagle wrestling to end, so they could stage a simulated grout stampede. They rode now at the galloping, rifle-shooting commandos. Midway in the arena the two groups collided and began hand fighting and shooting.

Silvera made his mount trot away from the struggle, and he didn't follow Wolfpit, who rode, whooping, into the confrontation. Silvera looked back once, then galloped for the exit. He had three novels to write.

King Eddie bent closer to the barbecuing machine and pushed the row of charcoal-activating buttons. "That's better," he said when the bricks began to glow. To Silvera he remarked, "Patsy and I saw your performance at the Rialto in the *Green Knight,* Joe. We were in the standing-room-only section and I suppose you didn't see us."

"That really is democratic."

"Well, sure, no command performances for us," said the slender king of the Picada Territory. "We also liked your work with Wolfpit Spanner's animal show a couple weeks back. Too bad Merced K and his World Thug people barged in, though it made for a lively show. I regret Merced K himself and most of his followers got away from the royal guard and the local police." The king held out his hand. "Glad you crashed this affair, Joe. Have fun at our reception for selectman candidates and their friends." He grinned at the hundred people in the marble patio behind the royal palace.

"I came to find Bugs Mainey," said Silvera.

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The king slapped a grout-meat patty on the grill. "I think I know why. Bugs was saying something about it during the cocktail hour. You ghost-wrote three of those delightful Wolfpit Spanner novels for him and turned them in at his publishers. Then you discovered that Bugs had already collected your money and is going to use it to finance the last phase of his selectman campaign."

"You're very perceptive, your majesty. Where is Bugs?"

"Beyond this patio there's a lagoon and at its center a dance pavilion. I believe Bugs escorted Queen Patsy out there. Dancing is about to begin."

Silvera hurried across the moonlit marble and then through soft grass. On a pier made of wrought iron and ivory stood a line of twenty guests. He joined it. Just pulling off from the pier was a barge filled with black-tuniced musicians. Silvera inhaled sharply. The second violin was Merced K, the unkempt commando.

Silvera hopped out of line and ran to the water's edge. "Hey, boatman."

The royal bargeman frowned across the water at him. "Wait your turn, please, sir."

Silvera balanced on one foot and tugged off a shoe. "You've got a boat load of World Thugs."

"A boat load of what, sir?"

"Thugs, commandos, assassins," shouted Silvera. He unseamed his tunic, made sure his pistol was sealed in its watertight holster.

"Isn't that what's-his-name who played Satan in the allegory?" asked a red-haired matron on the pier.

Silvera dived into the lagoon, which was heated and scented, and swam for the pavilion. The lemon-yellow barge was spinning slowly now. The bargeman had abandoned it and Merced K was struggling to take over the tiller. His commando raiders were unseaming their musicians' uniforms and drawing weapons and strangling cords from under their singlets.

Silvera swam on and reached the leather and colored-glass pavilion in under five minutes. He pulled himself up onto the synthetic grass that circled it and tumbled over once. He caught his breath and stood. Back on the patio royal guards were blowing silver trumpets and police whistles. The barge full of commandos was still spinning; the spurious musicians had begun firing with hand blasters.

"Well, it is Jose Silvera, to be sure," said Bugs Mainey from the steps of the pavilion. Queen Patsy, a handsome brunette, was beside him. "This is a very gifted writer you see dripping before you, Patsy, my girl."

"$5000," said Silvera.

"Oh, now, Joe," said Mainey. "You can see for yourself how these lads are dogging my footsteps. I

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need that extra money for protection, for bodyguards."

"Have you hired any bodyguards yet?"

"Well, I've been stumping for teleportation and haven't had the time, as yet."

"Good," said Silvera. He walked up the stairs and knocked Mainey out. When the writer was flat on his back on the slick dance floor, and Silvera had waved the other guests away, he bent and located the candidate's large wolfskin wallet. Inside was $3500 in large bills. Silvera shook his head, took the cash, and returned the wallet.

"How much does he still owe you?" asked the young queen.

"$1500."

"Give me your address and I'll make sure he sends it," said the queen. "I'm an admirer of yours."

"See my agent." Silvera stuffed the money in his holster alongside the pistol. He bowed to the queen, sprinted across the grass and dived back into the lagoon.

In the November issue of

Venture Science Fiction

PLAGUE SHIP, a complete new novel by Harry Harrison. There's plenty of rousing action in this fast-moving story about an interplanetary spaceship's turbulent run to Mars and the desperate struggle for survival of its crew and passengers. Also, short stories by Christopher Anvil, Robin Scott, James Tiptree, Jr. and others. On sale now at your newsstand, 60¢.

(The May issue of VENTURE featured Gordon R. Dickson's novel HOUR OF THE HORDE; the August issue featured Julius Fast's THE LEAGUE OF GREY-EYED WOMEN. If you missed either of these, or if you've had trouble finding VENTURE at your newsstand, copies are available direct from the publisher. 60¢ each to Mercury Press, Inc., 347 East 53 Street, New York, N. Y. 10022.)

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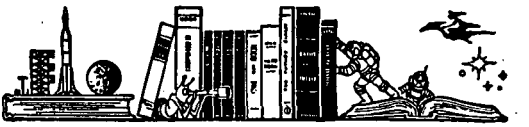
BOOKS



IT MAY JUST BE THE CURRENT general unrest misleading us—as we have been misled before—but these feel like transitional times in science fiction. No one—writer, reader, fan, editor or critic—yet knows with any certainty what is happening, or what science fiction will look like five years from now, but the feeling persists that these are times of change.

There have been portents:

Until recently, to be presented as science fiction meant small risk of failure and an absolute limitation on success. We have spent forty years as a self-sufficient, self-supported and generally ignored magazine literature. Our proudest boast has been that we have survived when other magazine literatures have died. We have been poor, proud, and honest in the years of wandering in the wilderness, and our chief audience has been engineers and fifteen-year-olds. Throughout our long ordeal we have been sustained by faith that we were destined for better things—Serious Attention, even Popularity.

And now— Two science fiction novels, STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND and DUNE—even though packaged and presented as science fiction, have been vogue items. This year's Hugo Ballot offers a choice in Drama among *2001*, *Charly*, *Rosemary's Baby*, *Yellow Submarine* and *The Prisoner*, a list of productions that can more than stand comparison with Hollywood's standard. Science fiction is a direct influence on the new popular music—titles like "2000 Light Years from Home," "Intersellar Overdrive," "Progress Suite," and "Who Are the Brain Police?" are not uncommon. Universities have been vying for the papers of science fiction writers—*living* writers, *beginning* writers—and one loser even intends to publish a Union List of everyone else's holdings. SF conventions, once a meeting ground for friends, are becoming congregations of four times as many strangers. And the report is that during the storm the other night on the Capitoline Hill, Lucius Tigelinus saw the statue of Hugo Gernsback bathed in a ring of fire.

What it all means is unclear—and we have been fooled before. Now? Why now? What now?

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Is the coziness gone? Is it possible to be both Popular and Virtuous? Is popularity worth having? Is it too late to ask the outside world to just forget the whole thing?

Two disturbing points do present themselves. One is that the portents are coming at a time when the magazines, which have been the mainstay of science fiction for forty years, seem to be in difficulty. And another is that by any serious standard science fiction has yet to produce more than a handful of titles that someone other than an engineer or a fifteen-year-old can read without apology.

In the last several years, I've come to the conclusion that science fiction does not have to be a juvenile literature, that—set the pea patch of technology to one side—science fiction is an undiscovered universe. And I think this is the secret belief of many in the younger generation of science fiction writers. Joanna Russ, speaking to the Eastern Science Fiction Association in January, said, in effect, that science fiction is the Elizabethan theater in 1590—waiting . . . I have every reason to think she was perfectly serious.

My basic premise as a critic is that it *is* 1590; and to judge books accordingly. In that light, the five books on hand for review are interesting examples of the curious, uncertain and half-formed state of the field of science fiction.

THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN, by Michael Crichton (Knopf, $5.95), is science fiction and a Book-of-the-Month Club selection. It has been favorably reviewed by *Life, Look* and the *New York Times,* and it has sold to the movies for an impressive sum. It is also cheap, sensationalistic, hastily written trash—ultimately no more important to the field than SEVEN DAYS IN MAY, ultimately no more important than SEVEN DAYS IN MAY. The most interesting thing about the book is that although it has not been marketed as a science fiction novel, it has been reviewed as one. But it is no credit to the field.

In THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN we are menaced—or, rather, we *were* menaced, since this is a report on a past crisis—by a plague brought to earth by a "Scoop satellite" which has been sent up for that very purpose by our CBW people, but which has been broken into with pliers and chisel by an Arizona country doctor. The story is either a plausible thriller—that is, you believe in the plague and in the efforts of the scientific and medical team to cope with it—or it is nothing.

Crichton bolsters his story with easy expertise and massive documentation, but the story never

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hangs together. The main reason is that Crichton invents his story as he goes along and is satisfied to put down the first thing that comes to mind, and one lie contradicts the next. Thus you have a bacteriologist who has won the Nobel Prize for work done in his spare time as a law student (Crichton consistently oversells) —but who doesn't know that he has a vein in his wrist. Thus you have a surgeon placed on the project team by the Department of Defense and the AEC over the objections of our bacteriologist-leader—and some year or more later he has yet to even familiarize himself with the basic purpose of the project. We are told that his reason for being there is that he is single and thus more likely to make a "correct decision" involving "thermo-nuclear or chem-biol destruction of enemy targets," the "Index of Effectiveness" (*sic*, God help us) of single males being .824 compared to .343 among married males. Thus you have an Army van with a rotating antenna on top tacking back and forth across the Mojave desert taking triangulations every twenty miles on a grounded satellite—the landing site of which has already been predicted with an error of a few hundred yards. Two vans, we are told, would be suspicious. Thus you have a portentous scientific report on the probability of contact between man and other life forms with all figures to four places and a list of possibilities adding to unity—but which ignores the possibility of encountering a life form more advanced than our own (the "7+" level of data handling, if you please), or the possibility of encountering a life form radically different from our own, or the possibility of encountering no life at all. Crichton's documentation is fake, his expertise is fake, and even his basic problem turns out to be a fraud —after a few days the plague ups and goes away.

In a way, it may be the very implausibility of THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN beneath its officious and authoritative surface that is the basis of its success. People like to be scared, but they don't like to be *really* scared. An ANDROMEDA STRAIN done with true care and attention might be too scary for real enjoyment. We had a book like that earlier this year in Tom Disch's CAMP CONCENTRATION—the problem posed was so hairy and so final as to even scare the author into bringing the Marines onstage at the last moment to save the day. Far more people are likely to read THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN than will ever read CAMP CONCENTRATION precisely because it is less real. Its implausibilities are a constant reminder that it need not be taken seriously. It should make a perfectly terrible movie.

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Arthur C. Clarke's THE LION OF COMARRE and AGAINST THE FALL OF NIGHT (Harcourt, Brace & World, $4.75) and Fritz Leiber's A SPECTER IS HAUNTING TEXAS (Walker, $4.95) are both leftovers from science fiction's juvenile days, though Clarke's stories were written in the forties and Leiber's novel was first published in *Galaxy* last year.

AGAINST THE FALL OF NIGHT was Clarke's first novel. It jumps a billion years into Earth's future to the sand-encircled city of Diaspar. Its appeals are emotional—the thirst for knowledge at all costs, the nostalgia of time (" 'Ah, here's Bensor with the latest ten million years of history.' "), and the wonder of strange isolated places. At the same time, the story is curiously unemotional. Clarke's characters, truth to tell, are no better developed than Crichton's—the zombies of *2001* are rather more the rule than the exception in Clarke's fiction. More important, in this case, is that the story is largely undeveloped—too much is asserted, too little is examined. It is a good juvenile novel with faults serious enough that Clarke rewrote it completely as THE CITY AND THE STARS five years after its initial publication.

"The Lion of Comarre" is padding, a thin novelet from a 1949 issue of *Thrilling Wonder,* previously unreprinted, and included here to add sixty pages to a short book. Its appeals are much the same as those of AGAINST THE FALL OF NIGHT, and its twelve hundred years in the future don't look, taste or smell very different from the billion years of Diaspar.

Curiously, too, the narration of both stories has one foot stuck in 1945. The stories are dated by an uncritical scientism—again not much different from Crichton and his Indexes of Effectiveness, though infinitely more honest—by cans, by the advent of transistor radios, and by haste and shortcuts. It would be interesting to see if a modern sense of wonder story could be written that would not date so easily.

A SPECTER IS HAUNTING TEXAS resembles Fritz Leiber's very first science fiction novel, GATHER, DARKNESS!, in being an intermittently satirical melodrama about revolution. The target of both satire and revolution in GATHER, DARKNESS! is organized religion. The target in A SPECTER IS HAUNTING TEXAS is Texas—which is to say the American impulse toward gigantism.

The Specter is Christopher Crockett La Cruz, an 8′6″ (or 8′8″, depending on which page of the book you choose to take for authority) ninety-seven pound Shakespearean actor co-opted into a Mexican revolution against the hormone-enlarged rulers of a post-World War III Greater Texas.

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The differences that twenty-five years have made are that the satire in SPECTER—while it lasts—is painted in broader strokes than the satire in GATHER, DARKNESS! and that the revolution is a temporary failure. Otherwise, the books are much of a piece.

At its best, SPECTER is not particularly original. It covers ground covered better ten years ago by H. Beam Piper and John J. McGuire in A PLANET FOR TEXANS and by Richard Wilson in THE GIRLS FROM PLANET 5. Its greatest strength, in fact, is in conceits and occasional lines. And two-thirds of the way through it falls apart, its satire forgotten in favor of the melodramatic requirement of movement at any cost.

SPECTER is not the first science fiction book crippled by melodrama. Melodrama is a legacy of science fiction's forty years in the pulp wilderness. Melodrama has been the main vehicle of science fiction expression, first by requirement, latterly by habit, with only occasional exceptions such as the work of Pangborn or Clarke. Ultimately, however, melodrama will blur and distort where necessary for the sake of color, movement and superficial excitements, and this makes it an uncertain medium for any work that would make fine distinctions. Robert Heinlein's BEYOND THIS HORIZON is a good example of a serious and superior book twisted out of shape by the 1942 assumption that novels need melodramatic conflict. BEYOND THIS HORIZON would be a finer book without its revolution, and A SPECTER IS HAUNTING TEXAS, like GATHER, DARKNESS! before it, is, without the same claims to stature, similarly spoiled.

THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS by Ursula K. LeGuin (Ace, $.95)* is a long, serious and overwhelmingly detailed book. It comes with the cachet of the Ace Science Fiction Special line—a monthly series which has regularly shown what an intelligent editor (Terry Carr) can do with a limited budget and a good eye. The large number of original first novels in the series is no accident. Mrs. LeGuin's novel is not her first, but her previous novels have all been Ace books. THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS is well above the average in literacy, invention and ambition in this our year of 1590, but ultimately as a story it is a flat failure.

The story, carried by illustrative folk tales, by the narration of a native he/she and by the musings of a lone Earth envoy, relates the opening of the closed, isolated and divided planet of Winter to the eighty worlds of the human Ekumen. Mrs. LeGuin's interest is

*Also available in hard cover, Walker and Co., $4.95.

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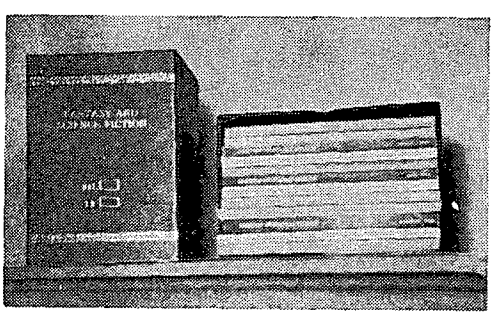
in her world of Winter and its hermaphroditic humans, and she gives us detail after detail about them. Her story, however, is a public story, her characters are consistently held at arm's length, and her action is summarized rather than shown. Nonetheless, to the end of the story and past it into an appendix we are still being given statistics, facts and anecdotes, as though this were a color travelogue and our only interest in raw information. Even her hermaphrodites, seen only in public function, eventually seem purely male, partly because she chooses always to call them "he." What we have at last is not so much a novel as the theory for one, but with all the vital arguments yet to be made. There is hope in a book like this—its intent is far from juvenile and that is an absolute necessity if we are ever to have a truly first-rate science fiction—but it is only the faintest taste of what science fiction might be.

Pray—all of us trying to write science fiction need your prayers—but don't hold your breath.

—ALEXEI PANSHIN



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Alexandra was a cryo revival case, and she might well have been prepared for the enormous changes in speech, dress and custom that were to greet her in the twenty-fifth century. She was not prepared to be plunged into a cruel Orwellian nightmare, from which there seemed no escape.

THE CRIB CIRCUIT

by Miriam Allen deFord

SHE OPENED HER EYES SLOWly; the lids seemed to be weighted down. All she could see was a white, diffused glare in which two human figures moved vaguely. She closed her eyes again.

A man's voice said, "Oak neow?" A woman's answered him, "Lil more."

Something hard and cold was pressed against her temples. She slept.

When she woke again it was day. Suddenly she remembered everything.

She was not in the container that with its maintenance had cost all she possessed. She was lying on some kind of bed, and perhaps this was a hospital room, though the crowded implements on the long table made it seem more like a laboratory. The two figures were there again, and this time she could see them plainly—a man and a woman, both naked except for white coats reaching to mid-thigh. They were both middle-aged; the man was clean-shaven, and he was completely bald; the woman's greying hair was sparse and cut short. The woman smiled reassuringly at her.

This time the woman was the one who said, "Oak neow?"

Alexandra tried to answer but no sound came out. A pang of fear shot through her; the cancer had been in her throat. The woman laid a hand on her arm.

"Doan be fraid, you can talk, juss weak."

With effort she summoned a whisper.

"Am I well?" she asked. 'Have you cured me?"

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"Course. Not wake you till could."

She gave a long sigh. The terrible venture had paid off. In almost hysterical relief she burst into a long babble of explanation. The woman shook her head, still smiling.

"We know. Full file come with."

"What year is it? Can I get up and dress?" Suddenly she realized that she too, under a sheet of some shining fabric, was naked. "What comes next? Where is this? Are there—arrangements so I can find a place to live and get a job and—"

"Sh!"

"Sedtive?" the man asked.

"No need—juss react. Can you unnerstan her?"

"Hard."

"Call IBIS. They got someone."

He turned to the wall and dialed a small projection. In a few seconds the wall lighted up, and the face of a heavy-set elderly man appeared on it.

"IBIS," he said.

"Lo," the woman answered. "We got cryo case here. Time-speech trouble. You got"—she peered at the papers lying near her on the table—"twenny centry specialist?"

"Good," said the man on the screen. "Fine. Wait." He touched a button beside him—an intercom, Alexandra gathered. He spoke into it briefiy, then turned back. "Send this affnoon—oak?"

"Oak."

"Thanks for chance."

"*Our* thank."

The lighted wall switched off.

"Lil food neow—synthmilk. Tell them warm," the woman instructed the man. Apparently she was the doctor, he the nurse. She smiled at Alexandra again.

"Nice can swallow food?"

"Oh, yes!" A horrid memory of the last days swept over her—the agony, the drugs, the intravenous feeding until everything would be ready for her.

"Then you ress till affnoon, so strong nough to talk. Hard for you unnerstan our speech, hard for us too."

"If you'd rather use another language," Alexandra offered timidly, "I speak two or three. Or is it just a different pronunciation because of the difference in time? You *are* speaking English, aren't you?"

"Mercan," said the doctor firmly. "*You* Ilan Inglis? We have Ilan Inglis nurse, you want!"

"Oh, no, I'm American too. I just thought—"

"Wait. Time-speech specialist come affnoon. Juss eat and ress."

The nurse reappeared with a tray on which stood a small jug of a silvery metal from whose spout a flexible tube extended. He touched a button and the pillow lifted. He tucked a plastic

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napkin around Alexandra's neck —was the scar still there? there was no pain—and held the jug while she took the tube into her mouth after a questioning glance at him and his nod.

"Suck." he said.

It was warm and strengthening, and she sipped it eagerly. The doctor turned to go. Alexandra took the tube from her mouth to call her back.

"Just one question," she said. "What is IBIS?"

"International Bureau Investigate Speech," said the doctor. "I be back." A door opened in the wall before her and she vanished. Alexandra finished the—what was it called?—synthmilk and the quiet young man took the jug away. He brought warm water, lifted the sheet and sponged her off. Alexandra felt herself blushing. He did not seem to notice. He touched a knob and curtains shut out the daylight. "Sleep neow," he said. He too went through the invisible door, bearing the washing equipment with him.

What was this, a sexless world? Or, on second thought, what was she—an old wasted skeleton that did not even suggest to the male nurse that she was a woman? She tried to view her body under the sheet. But there must have been a sedative in the drink; in half a minute she was asleep again.

The expert from IBIS was young—about her own age, 26, she guessed—and handsome, though he too was losing what had been a fine head of wavy fair hair. And he wore nothing but shoes of some plastic material and a small pouch slung over his shoulder. The doctor brought him in about half an hour after Alexandra had wakened. "Dr. Loren Watts," she introduced him, and departed.

"And you are Alexandra Burton," he said, smiling. He had a nice baritone voice.

Alexandra looked surprised.

"I supposed by now you would all have numbers instead of names," she said.

He laughed. "We do all have numbers—one number we get at birth, which covers all our official connections—but we have names too, just like you. I might even be your remote descendant," he suggested.

"No, you couldn't; I've never had a child."

"Excuse me, I should have read your file first, but there was not time. Am I speaking correctly? Does it sound right to you?"

"Just a little stiff and formal."

"Ah, yes, it would be—I have learned your pronunciation only from early printed books of rhymed poetry. You must tell me when I am wrong. Of course, this is not my ordinary speech."

"Why is there such an enormous change?"

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"My dear young lady, there is as much difference in the pronunciation of English—though we now call our dialect Mercan—between Eliot and Gardner (who is our contemporary poet of genius) as there was between Chaucer and Eliot."

"Chaucer died in 1400. Do you mean it is 500 years from—from my own time?"

"It is five-month 16—you would say about May tenth, I think—we have a 13-month calendar now—2498 today."

She felt dizzy. How was she ever going to fit into such a far-off age? But all she said was, "Has it taken them that long to find a cure for cancer?"

"Was that your trouble? It must have been bad, to kill you so young. We found cures for some kinds of cancer long ago, but apparently not for the kind from which you suffered."

"I see. Tell me, are there very many of us? I mean people who, from my own era on, were cryolized and now have been revived? Could I meet some of them and talk things over and find out just what things are like now and how I can adjust to my new life?"

Dr. Watts looked embarrassed.

"Nonposs," he said, suddenly reverting to his usual speech. "With mos of them, didn outwork."

"You mean, they couldn't be revivified?"

He nodded, his gaze evading hers. She noticed now that he wore contact lenses, and realized that so had all the others she had seen so far, either face-to-face or on the wall-screen.

"Then—oh, aren't there *any* others?"

"Some," he mumbled.

"Can I—"

"Burton, I am here to teach you our way of talking, and incidently to advance my own knowledge of the pronunciation of your time. I am not competent for discussing other matters."

" 'Not competent to discuss'," she murmured.

"What? Oh. Thank you."

All at once she felt very weary.

"I'm afraid I must rest some more," she said. "You'll come again, won't you?"

"Every day, until we have learned everything we can from each other. I shall be here tomorrow morning. Shall I call your doctor now?"

"If you will. What is her name, by the way?"

"I do not know her, but she will tell you." He stood up to leave.

"Oh, just one more question—no, I'll ask her when she comes. I'll be seeing you."

"You will be—is that a colloquial phrase?"

"It only means 'till we meet again'."

"I see. Thank you. Farewell."

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"Just 'goodbye' will do." But the invisible door had already closed behind him.

The doctor's name, she said, was Harris. She did a good many unidentifiable medical things to Alexandra, and discouraged general conversation; apart from the difficulty of their understanding each other, she had become curt, and Alexandra guessed she had been talking to Dr. Watts. So she refrained from asking the question she had almost asked Watts—why people in the 25th century all seemed to be nudists. Anyway, she had more or less reasoned it out for herself: it was May, warm weather, and undoubtedly even in winter the houses were kept warm. This obviously pragmatic society must wear covering outdoors against the cold when needed, but otherwise only such useful garments as shoes to walk on, hats against sunshine, and sanitary jackets or tunics for such occupations as surgery or chemistry. She would have to get used to it. They must have sex under pretty strict control.

It wasn't important. The important things were, how soon would she be up and about again, and then how was she to live and make her living? The theory was that cryolosis subjects left money safely invested, which (even if a small sum) by the time they revived would have accumulated interest enough to provide a comfortable income. But Alexandra Burton, in despair at the thought of dying at age 26, had put her very last cent into the freezing procedure and preservation of her remains; she was a pauper. And she doubted very much whether there would be any opening in 2498 for a skilled computer operator. They had probably passed way beyond that.

Dr. Harris was too busy (and rather too short-tempered now) to be bothered, at least today. Dr. Watts was coming tomorrow, and perhaps she could glean some information from him.

But he was evasive again. "This is not my field," he said. "I am purely a philologist. We were fortunate to get first opportunity at you—there are a dozen subsidiaries of CRIB and we have to take our turn."

"CRIB?"

"That is where you are now—in CRIB's hospital annex. Cryolosis Revival Investigation Board."

"Oh." She felt uneasy. An "opportunity" at her by a dozen agencies? Then when and how would her new life begin?

She was rapidly growing stronger. She was beginning to eat full meals again, which though apparently synthetic and the vegetables probably hydroponically grown, were nourishing, if fairly tasteless. In two days Dr. Harris had her first sitting and

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then walking on a balcony outside her room—from which she could see nothing but windowless buildings. The daily lessons with Watts continued, but it was patent that he was getting a great deal more from her than he was imparting to her in the way of understanding and speaking "Mercan." In fact, when after a week Dr. Harris told her she had an appointment next morning with the Board, the doctor added that Watts would come along to interpret if necessary.

There were two women and three men on the Board. They placed her in an oddly shaped chair (but theirs were oddly shaped too), with Watts beside her, and sat in a circle around her. The chairman, bald like, evidently, most men now but whose thin body hair was white, opened the proceedings.

"First we explain," he said. "Then you ask, we answer."

She didn't get much of the "explanation," even with Watts's help. What she did comprehend sent a quiver of fear through her. As Watts had told her, she was to be passed around in rotation from one subsidiary of CRIB to another, each one studying and investigating her in relation to its own specialty. But it sounded more like "treatment" than employment; nobody mentioned wages or where she was to live. Was this still her own city? It looked very different, even the little she had seen from her balcony. Was she still a citizen? Had she any legal rights or protection? But she bided her time to ask questions and listened in silence.

"Each branch of CRIB," the chairman concluded, "take care your board and lodge and make transport your next assignment." He pronounced it "assigh-ment." At least, thanks to Dr. Watts, he was intelligible.

"Oak?" he inquired of the other members of the Board, and they all nodded.

"Neow you have maybe quiries?"

Alexandra braced herself.

"What I want to know first of all," she said slowly and clearly, "is about the others."

"Others?"

"The other cryolosis cases. There must be some, or you would never have this set-up. Where are they now, and can I meet them and talk to them?"

The chairman looked, puzzled, at Watts, and he translated.

"Not many," the chairman said carefully, "and you first from so far back. Their time not yours. Wat good you talk to them?"

"Whether our pasts are the same or not, our present is the same, and I want to find out from those who have already experienced it just what our new lives are like."

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Once again Dr. Watts interpreted, and this time he stumbled over "present" until it occurred to him that Alexandra had not been talking about gifts.

The chairman avoided her eyes.

"CRIB not set up juss for this —no, no! Only ten so far cured and revived, before you, none Mercan or Inglis but you." He waved away Alexandra's interrupting gesture. "And," he added "six of them incomplete revivals."

"Incomplete, how?"

"Bodies cured and restored, but freezing not soon nough. Brains too long deprived oxygen. Minds gone—idiots."

"Oh," Alexandra gasped. Better not ask what had become of them; in all likelihood they were dead. She struggled for self-possession.

"That leaves four," she said desperately. "Where are *they*? I speak several languages—"

"Three still in rotation CRIB branches their own countries. One —finished circuit."

"And—"

The chairman turned to Dr. Watts. "Tell her so she unnerstan," he ordered. "She muss unnerstan." He burst into a long explanation of which she caught only a few ominous words. One cryptic phrase, "op pop," kept recurring. Watts looked like someone who had been commanded to do the impossible.

"Chairman Venable means—Chairman Venable is a very distinguished scientist. All the Board are highly qualified. It distresses them to cause you—disappointment.

"I shall have to explain fully. You are educated and intelligent, I know that from our association. I am sure we can rely on you to be sensible—you will realize—

"Ours is a very complex, superorganized, but smoothly running society. I imagine our general level of intellect is far above that which obtained in your—your former lifetime. When we are faced with—with obstacles to our planned progress, we have to deal with them realistically.

"The only way we can handle the multitudinous—that is the word?—problems of our social system is by establishing and adhering strictly to a rule of optimum population."

So that was "op pop."

"We can allow for no unplanned additions. Births must, by various arrangements, equal deaths. You cryolosis cases came here uninvited. We have no provision for even a small influx of unexpected persons. You cannot go back, of course, but it is not fair to expect us to destroy one of our own, or to deny our own people the right to have offspring so as to accommodate strangers from a much less scientifically developed period."

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"That's specious!" Alexandra cried. "We are human too—we have a right—"

"You have no rights, only privileges, which we cannot afford to grant. I do not wish to be brutal, but I must be truthful. I will acknowledge—and I am only quoting Chairman Venable—that a few generations ago our ancestors made a bad mistake. We have of course always known of the existence of the stored containers, with their full dossiers attached to each. Incidentally, the practice of cryolosis ceased some 200 years ago; every one of you, revived or unrevived, dates from your time to about 2300. By that date the people then living had come to realize what cryolosis would mean to their descendants, and it became illegal.

"What our ancestors should have done was to refuse to treat or revive any of you. But the physiologists and the geneticists protested vehemently, and their lobby in World Government, which had become effectual two or three generations after your era, succeeded in securing a compromise settlement. As cures for the various diseases (including senility) from which you died were discovered, they were allowed to revive selected specimens—excuse the word, but that is what we were obliged to call them—you—but on condition that they should be maintained solely as subjects of scientific research. CRIB with all its branches—biological, historical, social, and whatnot—was already in existence, and was renamed and put in charge.

"It is hard, hard for us as well as for you. Some of you may be our own direct ancestors. So far, as Dr. Venable has told you, out of all those we have attempted to revive only five in all, including you, were restored to mental as well as physical health. In each instance we have had to explain the situation in a session similar to this one. It has been a terrific shock to each of the 'cryols', as we have come to call you, but in the end they have understood and accepted the conditions under which alone we can allow them to remain alive at all. We hope now that you too will understand and accept.

"Otherwise, we have no recourse except to—to return you to the extinction which should have been yours when you entered into this arrangement, for which we are not responsible."

Alexandra dug her nails into her palms in a frantic effort to avoid fainting. A Board member, looking at her with concern, pushed a button and summoned a robot bearing a sort of glass pump that sent a pungent mist swirling around her. She coughed and blinked and sat up straight again, her faintness over.

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"Tell me the exact truth, Dr. Watts," she said directly. "I understand what you have said so far; I can hardly agree, but I see your viewpoint. But you have omitted something, haven't you?"

"What?"

"When we—laboratory animals have made the circuit, when every branch of CRIB has studied us in turn and recorded its findings, what happens to us then?"

There was a silence. Then Watts said reluctantly, "There is no place for you. You are—we call it euthanased."

Venable, echoing the word, murmured. "You will be asleep. No hurt."

"I hate this!" one of the women on the Board burst out suddenly. "It is cruel. We should have let them all stay dead."

Numbly Alexandra noted how under the stress of emotion the slack pronunciation became sharpened.

"It is the law. We did not make it, but we muss obey it."

"Then," the woman said, "we should lie to them—let them think when CRIB circuit over they have new life like ours."

There was an agitated murmur among the other Board members. "Immoral!" objected one of the men. The chairman raised his hand.

"Plizz! Order! We discuss nother time." He turned to Alexandra. "Session over. You go now. Watts take you back to room."

Lying awake that night in her hospital bed, Alexandra mulled over and rejected possible and impossible ways of escape.

Suicide? What was the point of that, even if she had had the means? Death was what she was trying to avoid. There was no possible way of going back, of being refrozen; cryolosis was no longer practiced in 2498 and if it had been, she would have been the last person to be considered for it. For a while she played with a fantasy—Loren Watts had fallen in love with her, he would rescue her and take her away and hide her. That was nonsense; common sense told her that he was interested in her merely for philological reasons, and even if that had not been true, he would have wrecked his career by any attempt to save her, or even any protest. Running away, getting out of the hospital somehow and trying to lose herself in the city? How, without money, without a chance of earning any, and unable even to speak comprehensibly?

Then just give up as the others had done, acquiesce, submit and go the rounds as a guinea pig, and then like any other experimental animal let herself be snuffed out when her usefulness was over? Every fiber of her being rebelled against that.

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Out of pure despair the first faint glimmerings of a plan came to her.

If somehow she had something, anything, with which she could bargain—

What? The various branches of CRIB would milk her dry of information about her own time, and inspect her physically and mentally far beyond her own powers of revelation. Her experience of computer technique would be child's play in the 25th century. The rather feeble Psi faculty she had possessed did nothing for her now except to have warned her faintly of trouble coming here.

This Orwellian nightmare which was the world of 2498 was frightening. If only there were some way to warn people of the 20th century! There wasn't—apparently time-travel was still a dream. It would have been better in the long run, Alexandra thought bitterly, to have died of cancer in 1970—as indeed she had done—and make an end of it.

Would it have made any difference if, like other people, she had been rich enough to invest surplus funds that by some miracle of accruing interest would have prepared a fortune for her when she was unfrozen? Everybody had advised her against devoting her last penny to the freezing and its upkeep; even the Cryology Institute itself had yielded reluctantly to her insistence. No, she had told them, I shall be well again, I am young, I have no one to whom to leave my savings, I can make my way somehow. So here she was, in as strange a world as if she had come from another planet, although presumably she was still in her native city. And its ways were not her accustomed ways, and if they used money at all, no money of hers could have come down so many years—or made any difference if it had.

One thing she was determined on: if she could devise a means of bargaining, it would not be to assure her a new lifetime of going for all her remaining natural span of years from branch to branch of CRIB. Either she must give up and die, or she must find a way to live free, as one of the citizens of this new world.

But how?

And then an idea came to her. It was preposterous, she could never put it over. She could not have done so even in her own primitive time. But any factual ploy was completely hopeless. So it was this or nothing.

She began to plan.

However mechanical, inflexible and austere this 25th century society might be, its members were still human beings. Their emotions might be suppressed, but they existed. No superego exists without an id.

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"How much longer do I have with IBIS?" she asked Watts at their next session.

"About a week more, I think. Then you go next to HIP—Historical Investigation Project."

"Does each of them take about the same time?"

"Oh, no. When it comes to the physical, psychological, and genetic branches, they might take weeks, even months. The intellectual research programs like IBIS and HIP cannot take so long—they depend on what the subject knows consciously that is of any value to us, and that is not likely, except for the language differences, to be very much."

"I see."

So now she knew that her escape effort must take place while she was under investigation by HIP. Only these so-called "intellectual" branches of CRIB would be likely to be manned by human researchers; the physical examinations would undoubtedly be by machines.

That meant she must be able, by the time of her transfer from IBIS, to speak and understand "Mercan." She applied herself intensively to her side of the dialogue with Watts, no matter how hard he tried to tip the balance in favor of himself. By the end of the week she could understand most of the conversation addressed to her, or overheard, by doctors, nurses, and speaking-robot orderlies in the hospital, and could make herself fairly well understood in turn by them.

Dr. Watts bade her farewell with reluctance, but obviously only because he was not sure there was nothing left he could learn from her. Any dream of his personal interest in her was just that—a dream. Since she had never seen any other member of the IBIS staff, she assumed that in all the other branches also just one investigator would be assigned to her.

She was transported to HIP, wherever its quarters were located, at night and by a bewildering series of shafts and escalators and ramps and elevators. She found one difference when she arrived; she was established in a room and bath in an unspecified building, and told that her meals would come to her whenever she ordered them by operating a rather elaborate menu dial. A slide in the wall came out with the food—strange-tasting and apparently synthetic, on a hot plate. The bed and the bathroom fixtures, too, had peculiar features with which she had to acquaint herself by experiment. She was left alone for the rest of the night, and finally managed to drop off to sleep until chimes awakened her and a voice from a grille high in the wall announced that a member of the HIP staff would arrive in 15 minutes.

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The HIP researcher, to Alexandra's relief, was a woman. Not only was it still hard to accustom herself to the universal nudity, but the plan she had in mind might be easier to achieve on a female-to-female basis.

"I am Dr. Ann Mayhew," the historian introduced herself. She was young, good-looking, and had the brisk immediacy of all the scientific workers—were they all doctors of one sort or another?—whom Alexandra had met. She carried a kind of portable computer whose workings Alexandra, for all her own cybernetic training, found inexplicable.

"You are, from dossier, very well educated for your era," Dr. Mayhew said. Alexandra bristled at the faintly patronizing tone, but this was no time to arouse antagonism. "I begin, therefore, by ask you about several dispute points twenny centry history."

"I'm not sure," Alexandra began carefully, pronouncing the words as Watts had taught her, "whether I shall be able to answer your questions in terms that will mean anything to you."

"Why not?"

"Because in my day so much depended on—well, extraneous issues—"

"Extraneous? That means?"

"Outside—you might say irrelevant. You see, we are—we were guided very largely, even if only subconsciously, by motivations that arose not from logic or reason but from pure feeling, often from irrational emotions which we ourselves knew to be so, but could not free ourselves from."

"Barbarous! You mean you allowed such to guide your national and or international action?"

"I'm afraid so."

Dr. Mayhew was silent. She looked bewildered, as if not knowing how to go on from a standpoint she found imcomprehensible. Alexandra waited. Finally the historian said tentatively. "You are right, it will be hard. But we try. For examp—"

"Wait!" cried Alexandra suddenly. She felt a little light-headed; there was every possibility that in a few minutes she might be cut short and ordered liquidated as mentally unsound. But it was now or never.

She braced herself.

"Before you start," she said, "tell me one thing: do you want the official history, or the real history?"

"You mean not the same?"

"Of course not. I told you we were guided largely by feeling rather than by reason. There was a thing we used to call the credibility gap. In other words, those in power often lied to the public, because they feared that if they told the truth, the result might be panic, perhaps total chaos if it couldn't be stopped in time."

Dr. Mayhew frowned; she

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seemed, Alexandra rejoiced to observe, entirely baffled.

"After your era," she said slowly, "there is—hiatus. I am not allowed give you details, for fear may influence your own report. But there was—catastrophe, and after was period of what you call chaos. It last for more than century, then gradually control regained, and sosh sist built up to perfect govment we have today."

Alexandra suppressed a wry smile. Such smugness deserved slapping down.

"So," the historian continued, "are gaps in our detail knowl of late twenny and early twenny-one centries. Our incomplete knowl starts with very time when you lived. That why we so pleased have good cryo case at last from your era."

"The time in which I *first* lived."

"When you first lived, if prefer. That is period about which I am to question you. But now you say were two kinds of history, official and real. That is hard to believe, but if true then course we want the real history. Only, tell me—from your dossier merely private citizen, primitive computer programmer by job. How, then, if some of your history hidden from people at large, would you know anything about it?"

Alexandra drew a deep breath.

"Well," she said demurely, "I had another occupation—job, too. In a way, I was an undercover agent."

"A spy?"

"Not exactly. You see, I was tested and found to have strong Psi powers. So I was enlisted for —negotiations with those who were *really* running things." (Well, she *had* had some ESP, though hardly as strong as all that.) "That led to my being made eligible for freezing after it was discovered I had inoperable cancer. I would be the first of us agents to die, and I was given a message to deliver to the future."

Dr. Mayhew sniffed.

"Psi! I know what you mean by it, but pure nonsense. You might as well say you were a witch."

"The authorities in my time didn't think so. I've lost my power now—they told me the freezing might kill it." (Best say that, true or not, to avoid demands for demonstration.) "But I *was* able to communicate with our real rulers."

"Who were?"

By sheer will power Alexandra kept her face immobile and her voice unshaken.

"Extraterrestrials."

Dr. Mayhew glared at her.

"Oh, come now—what is this? A trick? You are wasting my time, young woman. Any more of this, and I report you useless to us and pass you on to physical examiners. After them—euthanase."

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"Extraterrestrials," Alexandra repeated staunchly, her heart beating fast. "Have you ever heard of UFOs?"

"Delusions—your own officials investigated and exposed."

"Publicly. In actuality they knew they existed, and that they were unmanned automata sent out by manned mother ships from outer space. They discovered—all this was kept top secret—that the —you couldn't call them visitors, for they never landed, but they were observers—could not communicate by speech or sound.

"So it occurred to somebody that we might try communicating by telepathy. They searched for people with telepathic power, and I was only one of many they recruited. I was under oath not to reveal anything I learned, and I'm still not sure—"

"Don't be nutty. Don't forget you are absolutely in *our* power."

"That's just it, Dr. Mayhew. What I learned affects your time more than ours. I was given a message to deliver—but under conditions.

"They—our observers—realized that what you call the catastrophe—I can imagine its nature —was inevitable. They had hoped to reach us in time to reeducate us, but they decided it was too late. So all they could do was to get away from it themselves and send a messenger into the future, in the only way possible, to make sure it would never happen again.

"I am that messenger. As I told you, they chose me because I would be the first Psi agent to die. But I cannot deliver my message if I am to be a mere laboratory specimen who will be killed at the end of my usefulness. I must have a right to live my second life as a full citizen of your society. To make sure of that, they blocked my memory until that condition is fulfilled."

Dr. Mayhew laughed, but her laughter was slightly shrill.

"Very clever, Burton. Congrats; it was good effort. But nearly all cry specimens we cured and revived were brainstruck. And those not, said no word of messages to us. Soon we explore Galaxy—then we get any messages ourselves."

Keep cool, Alexandra admonished herself.

"I didn't say," she answered calmly, "that all of us were messengers. I said *I* was. You said yourself that I am from farther back than anyone else you have resurrected. It is quite possible that the aliens sabotaged all the other cryolosis subjects in my time, to be sure that I alone should survive. And perhaps they knew they couldn't wait until you had extrasolar travel. For my message is a warning of greater catastrophes still—and I can't deliver it except as your fellow-citizen."

There was a long silence. Then

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the historian said, "Frank fact, doan believe you. Doan believe Psi factor exists. But I am only staff member HIP. I postpone quiries. You be called again before full meeting of Board. Meanwhile we keep you here as our guest."

As your prisoner, Alexandra reflected. Nevertheless, things were moving. Now if she could hold fast—

It gave her time, anyway—time to build up her story and do her utmost to put it over.

For it *was* a story, of course.

She knew nothing about UFOs except what she had read in the newspapers. Anybody could be frozen for cryolosis who had the money to pay for it. There had never been any "agents". She had no message from anybody to anybody. She just wanted to keep on living, and as a free individual in the world where she had awakened.

Everything, she realized, must depend on whether this highly rationalized society yet possessed some human weaknesses—whether its members were capable of curiosity, credulity, fear, even superstition. If they weren't, she was sunk. If they were, she must still produce something that would force a bargain with them.

The Board members were the same as before, with Venable as their chairman, except for one new face and one missing, that of the woman who had protested in her behalf.

By this time Alexandra was accustomed to the universal nudity, including her own. What she did still find frustrating was the fact that everybody—at least all adults, since she had seen no children—seemed to wear contact lenses, so that it was impossible to figure out their expressions. All the lenses were a frosty blue, though the usual skin color argued that by now there were few racial differences on earth.

So if Venable's glance was supposed to intimidate her, it had no effect—but neither could she read any sympathy or acceptance in his gaze.

"Have record from Mayhew your talk to-er," he began pontifically. "Explain."

"I told her," said Alexandra sturdily, "that I had Psi powers during my former life, that I had been used by the government to communicate with—"

"Know all that," the chairman interrupted her impatiently. "No need repeat. She told you was nonsense—hold to it and we destroy you as brainsick soon as through examining. This your last chance explain. Retract?"

"I hold to my story."

His voice softened.

"Burton, we are not brutes. We can unnerstan efforts to postpone, maybe escape. Confess you made up story and we forget you told it.

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Nicer be euthanased than—destroyed."

It was like a police interview in her own time, Alexandra thought sourly—alternately bully and wheedle, but get the confession. She had nothing to lose, so she must keep on fighting.

"What's the difference?" she asked boldly. "Whether it was true or not, I am to be killed. So there is no point in my lying to you. My story is true."

It was the last throw. If she could convince them—

She could not.

"Admire your courage, Burton. Good try," said Venable dryly. "Take her back to HIP," he ordered an attendant.

So she had fought and lost, and that was that.

Or was it?

Alexandra had just a month in which to face her coming second death. She was in the middle of her examination by GAP—Genetics Assessment Program—when the aliens, finally despairing of getting their warning across to the obdurate Terrans, at last invaded Earth and wiped out the humans infesting it before they re-seeded it with a more promising race.

The last thing she had time to realize was that her lie was not a lie: that she had had far stronger Psi powers than she had guessed, and that her whole unsuccessful defense had been implanted in her mind, as a last hope, by the Extraterrestrials who had been observing mankind since the 20th century.

Coming soon

Next month we feature BYE, BYE, BANANA BIRD by Sonya Dorman, an offbeat adventure that introduces Roxy Rimidon (36-25-38) of the Planet Patrol and follows her from basic training to her first assignment in the Caribbean jungle. Also, an entertaining pastiche by Manly Wade Wellman and Wade Wellman, about how Sherlock Holmes might have reacted to the Martian invasion imagined by H. G. Wells. Stories by Dean R. Koontz, Edgar Pangborn and K. M. O'Donnell will also be along next month or soon thereafter.

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Gilbert Thomas (LUANA, *September 1966;* BUTTERFLY WAS 15, *September 1968*) *has the knack of conveying a great deal with a minimum amount of words, as in this latest story, with its strangely moving blend of events both domestic and fantastic.*

COME UP AND SEE ME SOME TIME

by Gilbert Thomas

THE SPACESHIP WAS IN THE center of the room. Hovering. Six feet off the floor. I thought that it looked pretty good and wondered how he'd done it. I ran my hand around the contraption —I'm tall—and there was nothing there. Obviously there was nothing propping the machine up from below. Nothing from the ceiling. There was the smell of chemicals, a burned spot on the floor, and he was in orbit.

It doesn't pay to have an exceptional child. They're always doing things you can't understand.

I touched the machine and it moved gently with my hand, effortlessly, but it always came back to its original position—tipping slightly.

The room was circled with photographs, blow-ups of Yuri Gagarin, Gus Grissom, Roger Chaffee, Ed White, all the new heroes, with his worktable covered with electronics and books I couldn't figure out. He was only 12 and now he was hovering in his spacecraft six feet off the floor in the center of his workroom in the basement—just as he said he would.

Remembering he'd also said:

"Why did you drop that penny on the girl's stomach, Daddy?"

"To see if it would bounce."

I always tried to tell the kid the truth, even when it hurt—and I do like the looks of all those taut little female bodies on the beach, tanned in their little bikinis; they always lie in pairs for mutual protection, eyes closed, pointed toward the sea.

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An impulse. I just wanted to see if the penny would bounce on that little blonde's stomach like on a perfectly made midshipman's bed.

"Oh," he'd said.

His mother was dead and you couldn't tell him the whole truth, he couldn't have stood it, no one can stand it, if it's true; especially if it's true. I'd tried to get him interested in politics, or in going to the Point. I have quite a war record, but I didn't want my boy to be an enlisted man—that's reasonable. But he just kept screwing around with those crazy books. Well, books aren't all bad, but I like to know what's in them.

"Daddy, what was that lady doing in my bedroom this morning?"

"Her car broke down and I had to give her a lift—"

"Oh."

I pride myself on quick thinking—grace under pressure, Hemingway called it—but I later found it was a saying dating back to the ancient Romans—I wish he'd mentioned that; I always feel a man should give his sources. Anyway, to tell you the truth, my bed had broken down and we had just moved over. Ted was asleep on the couch in his workroom, and I didn't think he'd see her. I forgot he was always up at the crack of dawn—before six—an exceptional child.

His room hung with wall signs:

ABLATING MATERIALS—special heat-dissipating materials on the surface of a spacecraft that can be sacrificed (carried away, vaporized) during re-entry . . .

ABLATION—melting of ablative heat-shield materials during re-entry of spacecraft into earth's atmosphere, at hypersonic speeds . . .

ABORT—the cutting short of an aerospace mission before it has successfully accomplished its mission . . .

"Abort," I now smiled into the hovering spacecraft. But he was having none of it—he merely looked at me out of the plexiglass visor of his helmet. That it was some kind of a trick, this I knew—he was a pretty clever kid. But I don't like to be put on—not for too long, anyway—I have a sense of humor and can laugh at myself, I always say, but not over too long a period.

"Abort!" I said, but he just looked at me. The spaceship tipping gently in the air.

I remember when he'd got the kit—$10.75—with it supposed to be a mock-up of the real thing, space-capsule Mercury 3—"Freedom Seven." A pressed fiberboard affair guaranteed to be perfect in every detail, with room inside for one kid. Put it together yourself. Fireproof, the label read, which I thought was carrying things a

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little far. But I guess it gives the kids a sense of reality—they keep up with the space program, its successes and failures.

Those crazy signs:

INTERPLANETARY SPACE—**that part of space conceived, from the standpoint of Earth, to have its lower limit at the upper limit of translunar space, and extending beyond the limits of the solar system by several billion miles . . .**

"Why do you have the signs posted in threes, Ted—over . . ."

INTERSTELLAR FLIGHT—**flight between stars; strictly flight between orbits around the stars . . .**

"Are you reading me, Ted?—over . . ."

INTERSTELLAR SPACE—**that part of space conceived, from the standpoint of Earth, to have its lower limit at the upper limit of interplanetary space and extending to the lower limits of intergalactic space . . .**

"Now stop playing around and answer me—!"

I was really just making conversation. Ted had been using the signs as mnemonic devices, as he called them; it had something to do with his theories of deep memorization. I passed my hand completely around his little device, and I'm damned if I could feel anything. It still tipped slightly in the wind, although, of course, there was no wind. His face was calm behind its visor, as he moved deliberately, working the dials with a silver-clad hand.

"Now this is just goddamned enough, Ted—you get the hell out of that thing—!"

And this was the first time I heard Myra's voice.

"I can't stand it any more!"

It was Myra, all right.

"The last ten years have been hell—!"

But she was dead—as the spacecraft tipped gently.

"You go to hell!"

That was me.

"You may please go to double-damned hell!"

That was me all right—it's difficult to recognize your own voice the first time you hear it played back to you—but it was me all right:

"Why don't you just get the hell out of the house—"

I was the only one who said things like that, in that particularly annoying whine I go into when I forget myself.

(I'm not a sympathetic character, I've said to myself, more than once—or thought as much.)

"Daddy," the tape machine said.

It was Ted's tape recorder all right, the little bastard had recorded us.

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"Daddy—where's Mommy—?"

I'm Daddy, and I always called her Mommy.

But he hadn't called her that in years. Retrogression. But I've got good ears, and there was a subtle difference—that *wasn't* the recording machine speaking—that was a message *direct* from the spacecraft:

"Where is she . . . ?"

He knew where she was. The voice was small and metallic, and I looked in past his plastic visor and saw him looking at me:

"I want to know . . ." his mouth was moving.

Now to hell with this, I was going nuts—I've got enough on my mind without going nuts in the bargain—(I always use too many words when expressing myself—I'm taking a course on how to read faster and retain more—to keep up with my son, if the truth be known, but I can't seem to stay ahead of the game.)

"Stop your drinking—"

It was me again, on tape.

"Where did you hide the bottle this time—"

She drank, all right—who doesn't—but there's a limit. And now the little bastard was trying to drive me nuts—there had always been a bond between Ted and the old lady that I couldn't enter, break, even if I'd wanted to, and they couldn't accuse me of that!

"Where did you put the goddamned bottle—I could use a little swig myself—!"

Christ—I must have said that three years ago—at least—when Ted was only 9. Did he have the tape recorder then?—obviously he had. Sold newspapers and had a route—up at 5:15 every goddamned morning of the week and out on that bike to hustle those goddamned papers.

HYPERGOLIC—refers to bipropellant combinations which ignite spontaneously upon contact or mixing . . .

ICE FROST—a thickness of ice that gathers on the outside of a rocket vehicle over surfaces supercooled by liquid oxygen inside the vehicle . . .

Why did he always have them by threes . . . ?"

EYEBALLS-IN, EYEBALLS-OUT—G in terms of vehicle acceleration, etc . . .

He likely found the terms easier to remember in groups. Association. He always had a reason for doing everything he did—I wish I'd had as much sense as a boy. And he'd saved his money and bought a tape recorder, which I now recall I thought was one hell of a thing for a boy of 9 to buy—but I didn't object—if he wanted to waste his money, that was OK by me—give him a feeling for values when the time came to get the damned thing repaired or when

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he just plain got tired of it. (I might have known he wanted it for something—to record Mommy and Daddy—how about that?)

"Get your goddamned hands off me—!"

I couldn't tell which one of us that was—what a screech—right in the upper register:

"Ow—it hurts!"

That must have been her:

"You're twisting my arm—!"

Yes, that was her all right. She. Christ, what a satisfaction—twisting the old lady's arm. I didn't do it very often—but when I did, I made it count.

"Daddy . . ." the voice came from inside the spacecraft—Christ, it wasn't a spacecraft!—how could it be? (It was just a kid's toy—built by a boy who was alone too much, left to himself too much—and that's one good way to get into trouble.) The hatch was secured.

"Daddy . . ."

I wish he wouldn't call me that.

His mouth was working in that damned helmet—but where was he talking from? Where was the speaker? If I could trace that, I could pull the plug. And maybe then the whole damned shebang would come down, and I could talk some sense into him. Stereophonic sound—he was driving me nuts. As he just tipped gently there in the center of the room.

(I should have known what he was doing with his spare time, given him a hand with the contraption—one thing's for damn sure, if I had, it wouldn't have worked.)

"Daddy—didn't you . . . *grk* Mommy—?"

I couldn't make out the word before Mommy, but I knew what it was.

"I didn't kill anybody," I said. Sometimes you have to lay it on the line. A boy should have more respect for his father. But this was crazy, too—talking to myself. I upped my voice so he could hear it through the fiberboard:

"I didn't kill anybody." I heard my voice saying—instant playback—he'd recorded me and I didn't have to repeat myself. You had to hand it to him—he was doing pretty well inside there, working from his panel—electronics, a pretty smart kid.

"I'm going away—" his mother said on the tape machine, and I could hear Ted laughing in the background—I hadn't heard him laugh like that in years, he always used to laugh like that when he was hysterical.

"You'll miss me when I'm gone—"

That was one hell of a thing to say to a kid, especially when you're drunk—everybody believes a drunk.

"Yes, you will—" the drunken

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voice kept saying, over and over: "You'll miss me when I'm gone—"

Well, she always was the type to feel sorry for herself—but that didn't have anything to do with how he was keeping that damned machine up in the air. He was doing something with magnets, that was it, he was doing it with magnets——

I cut the lights: no electricity, no electric magnets! But as my eyes got used to the dark—there he was, hanging in space, gently tipping.

I gave the machine a bang with my hand and it stung—not from electricity but because I'd banged it so hard. And it just hung there—floated there—with my son inside.

"Don't be afraid," my son said.

Now you hate to be told not to be afraid by a 12-year-old, and your own son to boot. I wondered when he was going to play back some other half-assed thing I'd said.

"I'm listening," I said, stupidly. What else could I say?

"I read you," he said, calmly enough. He loved that jargon—space jargon: "This is Chris Craft at Houston MSC." All the kids loved that.

THE UNEXPECTED—X-rays, nuclear energy, atomic clocks, photography, relativity, Mossbauer effect, Carbon-14, Van Allen Belts, detecting invisible planets . . .

His signs glowed in the dark:

THE EXPECTED—automobiles, flying machines (da Vinci), steam engines, submarines, robots, death-rays, artificial life, telepathy, immortality . . .

All he had to do at night was open his eyes to take it all in:

ANTI-GRAVITY—is "strictly for the birds"?

"Where'd you get your spacesuit?" I asked, stupidly. How do you make conversation under these circumstances?

"Don't be afraid," he repeated.

"That's not what I asked you," I said. "I asked you where you got that goddamned suit—"

"I don't know everything—" he said, calmly enough, but I thought I'd scared him.

"I'm going to throw myself in the Ohio River," his mother cried drunkenly on tape—which was funny—because we were living in New Jersey. But she'd grown up in Cincinnati.

"I'm going down and throw myself in the Ohio River—" Drunks always repeat themselves. And I could still hear Ted in the background, but he'd stopped laughing.

"No," he said—like he always does when he's upset, you had to listen hard to hear him.

"Christ, what a mess—"

That must have been later—

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one of the cops—ambulance drivers don't react that way; they're used to it. You could hear their heavy, recorded feet all over the floor—she'd fallen just outside the bathroom where there wasn't a rug—we'd always been going to get a runner to go from the regular rug up to the bathroom door to keep your feet warm in winter.

"Cover it up—"

Like all women, she'd taken poison—but what they didn't tell you is that with the corrosive stuff you turn yourself inside out, but you're still punctured down there, and there isn't anything you can do about it.

"Good-bye, Mom . . ."

He'd been a regular gentleman about it—helped carry the casket and all—and then, standing before the grave, he'd said: "Good-bye, Mom . . ." Well, I was glad he still had some feeling for the old lady—wasn't screwed up by religion or anything—so he didn't think she was going to float around in limbo forever because she took poison or something . . .

God knows what else he might have on that tape—that little recorder fitted right into his pocket where nobody could see it—a spy. Kids all thought they were spies these days—when they weren't going around being astronauts—or maybe even cosmonauts? You never know about kids these days; maybe he was identifying with Mother Russia.

"Comrade . . . ?" I said. Maybe that would get through to him. "Das vidanya," I said. I'd served on a freighter during the Second World War and picked up a little Russian—on the Murmansk run: "Dnepropetrovsk!" But the damn thing just hovered there, tipping in the half-light. There was a glow from his instrument panel—and when I walked around the contraption, it just turned gently with me—and I never could really see what he was doing with his hands in there.

"That's all right, Dad," he said. And now he was calling me *Dad*—thought he was growing up, that was it—about time.

"And now, I've got to go . . ." my son said.

(I'd get a knife or something and cut him out of there before something awful happened . . .)

"And you mustn't try to stop me . . ."

He was speaking good English for a kid.

"Go where?" I asked, stupidly.

"I'll know when I get there . . ."

Odder things have happened in this world—I had to keep telling myself that: odder things have happened in this world. Time flowing backward as well as forward, Ted had said, so the future already exists; as I watched him hanging there—staring ahead:

THE CUBE—

(The sign glowed on the wall:)

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. . . a perfect machined cube of meteorite iron and nickel, 3 inches by 2 inches, hard as steel, shaped, with a geometrically contrived groove circling it—a solid block of tertiary coal formed 300,000 years ago in Austria, 273,000 years before man had tools . . .

Ted was still staring:

THE GOLDEN THREAD—

(The machine was pointing at them like a lodestar—)

. . . embedded in the pure stone center of a rock quarry, England; the golden thread is 60,000,000 years old, created by hand or machine 59,000,000 years before man appeared on Earth . . .

(There was no third sign.)

And with that, moving cautiously but smoothly and definitely, he began to stretch inside the spacecraft, twisting open the hatch. I was going to turn on the lights, but it wasn't necessary—with the capsule open there was plenty of light in the room, reflected from his instrument panel. His suit was silver and looked like the real thing—professional—as he drifted into the air.

My God—he was floating . . .

"Good-bye, Dad . . ."

My God—he was going . . .

"You can't do that!" I said—and I think I was shouting.

As he floated gently in the air like a space-walker, moving freely but slowly and always toward the door, a small device in his hand pumping against the air like a bladder. Now he had the door open—his private entrance: (I'd been afraid of giving him so much freedom at so early an age, but what the hell, I'm permissive.)

"I'll see you . . ." his voice, muffled, was growing weaker as he worked out of range.

"Wait!" I called. "I'm going with you!"

"No . . ." weaker still, while I ran and grabbed his leg as he cruised out into the night. Christ, the people watching for things over New Jersey were going to get an eyeful tonight—

I took off my belt and strapped myself to him—we were floating free and picking up speed. I'm pretty strong and I cinched it tight—I'd be damned if I was going to lose my son at this late date.

"It's too late . . ." and in some ways the voice was weaker still, although I was tied up tight to him, swinging from one leg. Wherever we were going, we were going together.

"Good-bye, Dad . . ." as he reached down and cut me loose. (It could have been worse, we were only 50 feet up—he could have waited till it was 150 or more and done to me what I did to his mother. But he didn't—he was always a good boy.)

Those damned kits.

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We once introduced a story as "the overpopulation story to end all overpopulation stories." We were wrong, of course; it didn't even give them pause, and we suppose we should resist the temptation to call the following account—as brilliant as it is—the doomsday story to end all doomsday stories. So just read, and enjoy.

AFTER THE BOMB CLICHES

by Bruce McAllister

THE BOMB-SHELTER FAD HAD bombed out two decades ago, but as soon as widower Martin Potsubay could afford a half-decent one, he had a shelter built anyway.

"Call me a bomb-paranoiac, if you want," he told Sam at their Computek, Inc., office, "but I'm being practical in my own way. My bomb-paranoia would drive me crazy—eventually make me lose my job—if I didn't have a shelter built . . . And by the way, Sam, the nuclear holocaust will occur on a Saturday—"

—Which meant Martin would be off work and at home all day, within easy reach of his shelter, when the bombs began to rain.

The shelter contractors, too, acted as if Martin were "regressive" and touched in the head by "Luna's light"—but with a lunacy more serious than a simple paranoia neurosis. Behind his back, he heard one of the engineers mutter to another: "He's probably a UFO crank, to boot."

No, UFOs were a different matter—alien, unrealistic matter, so to speak: so Martin was not concerned with the possibility of alien vehicles.

Martin Potsubay was a computer analyst, and in a year's time—through "multi-variable analysis"—he had computed a nuclear-war probability too high to be neglected by any man who valued his personal future.

Knowledge that the nuclear

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Armageddon would fall on a Saturday came not from the computer, but from Martin's own intuition, which he had come to respect as strongly as any machine-probability. Before her death, his wife Julie had taught him such respect—through the consistent 100 percent prescience of her own feminine intuition.

And by the way (he wanted to tell the shelter engineer, but didn't) UFOs had neither a high computer-probability nor significant Potsubay-intuitions for their existence. And what was the probability of being killed by a UFO—even should one appear?

Martin wanted very much to live. Ever since Julie's death two years before, he had been trying to live as meaningfully as he had when she was still alive—and when their only son Richard was alive, before his death at fifteen in one of the weekly high school riots. The world might be going to hell, but no war would stop Martin in his tracks, in his attempt at *really living again,* if he could help it. And he could help it—with a bomb shelter. Even after the bombs fell, and he was more or less alone, existence still might offer him a chance at *really living,* in one way or another; he couldn't pass up that chance. It did not take a computer to see that the simple fact of survival enhanced Martin's chances for a meaningful future life . . .

In addition, Martin lived in a Los Angeles suburb, which meant chances were a million to one that his shelter would receive a direct bomb-hit—odds which, in turn, enhanced his chances for survival . . .

On Saturday, April 1, the rusty air-raid sirens sounded—sounded a little odd, but Martin did not hesitate. In forty-five leaps he reached his subterranean shelter, sealed himself in, sat down calmly, and started to wait—prepared to wait a week or two or four before exiting, depending on what his intuition told him.

As he had speculated he would—as was traditional in such situations—Martin thought back over the years, as he sat in his shelter. He tried *not* to think about Julie, because he didn't want to hurt himself (psychological pain being a cliche in such situations), and also because he had already thought about her a million times—in every probable way, with every possible memory—during the last two years.

Instead, he thought about his colleague Sam Belson, who was a bastard—at least, and most significantly, in the figurative sense.

First of all, Sam was an aspiring polygamist; his heart was a tract-housing development. Dorothy, his wife, was suffering in non-divorce separation way off in San Francisco; Cynthia, his lover,

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was pathetically content in the illusion that he would follow through with the marriage promised by the gaudy ring he had given her; and Betty, another lover, was unaware of either Dorothy's or Cynthia's existence, and assumed that Sam was a virgin and would marry her in three months.

The further fact that Sam had not kept silent about his "unholy trinity" of females, but had bragged about it again and again, made Sam a super-bastard in Martin's eyes. Sam was and always would be totally incapable of understanding what the loss of one woman could mean in a man's life; this made him inhuman. Even the lower animals—Martin had once read—stuck it out with a single mate during their reproductive affairs and even during the infancy of their progeny. Sam avoided the latter obligation through various hyper-efficient contraceptives—enough contraceptives, Martin sometimes imagined with disgust, to stop the entire human race . . . just as the bombs were trying to do right now, outside Martin's shelter.

Secondly, Sam stole office materials, gossiped with an holier-than-thou attitude about his neighbors, lied a blue streak, and once killed a dog that had broken milk bottles on his front steps three days in a row.

So now—probability said—Sam was a dead bastard, and so now—certainty said—Martin was somewhat happy with the massive probability of Sam's death.

On his third day of waiting, Martin found himself thinking of Spanish music. Wondering why, he finally realized, he thought that he could still hear faintly the air-raid sirens, which for some subliminal reason were sounding like Spanish trumpets.

No, that was impossible. The sirens would have stopped two days ago. What he was "hearing" now was merely the mental echo of those first sirens, the ones that had driven him into his shelter three days ago—those last impressive sounds his ears had received before he sealed himself in.

Such auditory illusions were minor, he knew. At first—three days ago—he had expected all sorts of retrospective nightmares and waking hallucinations to plague him in his shelter, but nothing of the sort had visited him yet. He was thankful he had so far been spared that one cliche—the cliche of Phantasms-in-the-Lonely-Bomb-Shelter.

So many cliches, Martin knew, were possible in the shelter. For instance, he could harbor cliche-thoughts about humanity, about how Martin Potsubay was now lone representative of his race; or he could remember his childhood

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with sweet nostalgia, years and friends lost forever; or he could hallucinate visitations by the ghosts of his peers, recently murdered by the bombs; or he could make detailed plans of how he would spend the rest of his life seeking another survivor; or he could think of God, how much closer he was to Him now; or he could listen to the lone, symbolic beat of his own heart—

Impulsively, Martin tried to sense his own heartbeat.

There seemed to be no rhythm at all. He felt his wrist quickly for a pulse. There was none.

Martin shrieked, felt his other wrist, and began trembling.

He had no life-signs; he was dead!

But he was moving and *thinking;* he had to be alive!

Checking again, he discovered that his organs were not functioning. He felt neither hungry nor full; neither fatigued nor rested. He was not breathing; he was only trembling.

He tried, but could neither urinate nor defecate.

He could move his body—limbs, torso, head et al.—but his body had no motor-activity of its own. His mind and soul were ruling his *corpus.*

Martin was still sitting on his shelter's "Standard" toilet, trying a third time to affirm his existence, when an angry voice broke through the shelter's cement-and-steel roof.

"Get the hell out here, Martin! Get moving!"

It was Sam's voice.

Still trembling, Martin buckled his pants, and moved toward the door.

"Sam?" he said weakly.

"Shake a leg out here, Martin, or I'm coming in!"

Martin opened the door, and walked out slowly.

At first Sam was not recognizable, as he was wearing a black robe and dark blue cowl.

"Why, Sam!"

Quickly and silently Sam raised a shining sword the color of dark mahogany.

The air-raid signals were still sounding—sounding like Spanish trumpets. They *were,* Martin realized suddenly, trumpets—thousands of omnipresent trumpets.

Martin looked around him, down the block, then up to the near horizon. All around, up and down the suburban streets, in and around houses and green yards, a total battle was waging. The belligerent hordes in contest were men, women, children and even the aged, half of them wearing dark robes, the other half wearing light robes—with respectively matching swords. Accordingly, in the sky surrealistic fire-balls a hundred times the size of the sun rolled and clashed, half of them

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as dark as the slimiest nocturnal swamp, the other half as bright as novae. And everywhere the wind tore and buffeted, either with thunder sounding like boomed commandments, or with the hissing of a thousand invisible reptiles.

There had been no bombs at all, Martin realized now. Trumpets—not air-raid sirens—had driven him into his shelter three days ago.

Dark Sam raised his sword again in a silent "touche."

Martin clenched his fist defensively, and was not surprised to find a scabbard in his hand. Lifting the sword for quick inspection, he discovered inscribed in gold script on the blade the word "Excalibur."

"Oh, for God's sake," Martin muttered to himself, sensing a profound absurdity in the situation. Then he leaped at Sam.

As he fought, Martin discovered that the pale wings on his back were a big help; and his body, he knew, would never tire in the battle. But then, neither would Dark Sam's.

"Nice—but is this *really living?*" Martin had to ask himself, and Sam caught him off guard, wounding him; but the wound healed instantly in the blast and wail of another trumpet.

This battle, Martin realized with a sigh, was going to be the longest war—"hot" or "cold"—ever on record . . . a helluva way for everybody—and "everybody" included Him—to spend eternity.

"I guess He feels guilty, wants to punish Himself," Saint Martin concluded silently, as his sword began singing, and Sam grew horns, and a million other cliches swarmed around him, *ad infinitum.*

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THE SIN OF THE SCIENTIST

by Isaac Asimov

RECENTLY AN ARTICLE APPEARED in a science fiction fan magazine entitled "Asimov and Religion." It analyzed certain of my stories in an attempt to show the vein of sincere religious thought that ran through them.

I was astonished, really, for I had not noticed that myself. Actually, I don't practice the rituals of any organized religion, and I do not attend any houses of worship. I am a strict rationalist and tend to dismiss anything that does not fall within the scope of reason, as I judge that scope to be.

However (and this is what may mislead people) I am *interested* in religion intellectually, as I am interested in almost everything, and I know a fair amount about the religions of the western world. What's more, I have no objection to saying things in a theological fashion if that offers economy and sharpness in presenting a thought.

Thus, I was much impressed by J. Robert Oppenheimer's remark, in connection with the invention of the nuclear bomb, that there "physicists have known sin." I consider it a sharp and dramatic way of saying a great deal in four words.

I would therefore like to take that phrase as my text (to continue the theological cast of thought) and expound upon it.

In particular, I want to offer some thoughts on (1) how "sin" might be defined in connection with science; (2) when it was that science may have committed its first sin; and (3) whether any particular scientist or scientists may be picked out as the original sinners.

First, the definition of "sin," and to begin with, we had better look at its proper meaning. It is a theological term and represents a trans-

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gression of a divine command; a disobedience to the moral law. In this way, sin is infinitely worse than the mere transgression of a man-made law or the mere violation of common sense. Sin is much worse than those actions that we can call "crimes," "blunders," "misjudgments."

If we want to deprive sin of its theological implications and apply it to science, let us at least keep the strength of the word, and decide to use it for *major* wrongdoing, something for which lesser words such as "crime" would be inadequate.

Sin, in connection with science, then, might be defined as representing the worst thing a scientist, in his role as scientist and not as mere man, can do.

We might say, for instance, that since it is the job of a scientist to investigate nature and to increase, if he can, the sum of human knowledge and understanding of the universe (including man, as part of the universe), then the worst thing a scientist can possibly do is to subvert this aim of science. His maximum evil would be to deliberately misinterpret nature in order, out of sheer malice, to decrease the world's store of knowledge.

But this must be eliminated, for there is no way, without divine insight, to be sure anyone is doing this. It is too subjective an evil to be judged. Thus, I can't point to a single case of such behavior in the history of science!

There have been scientists in plenty, to be sure, who have held back the advance of science. Abraham G. Werner held back the advance of geology through his mistaken adherence to the tenets of neptunism despite tons of evidence against it. Jons J. Berzelius held back the advance of organic chemistry by his stubborn insistence on an inadequate theory of molecular structure. George B. Airy delayed the discovery of Neptune through something approaching negligence.

In all these cases, and many more, however, the scientist in question sincerely thought he was acting for the best. All were devoted to the cause of advancing knowledge and all were quite certain that their every action was meant to uphold that cause. We lose patience with them now only through the glorious clarity of hindsight.

Through hindsight we can accuse scientists of the past of blunders caused by stubbornness, by self-love, by the crotchets of age, and by lack of imagination. All this is bad enough, but they are only blunders, and which of us is free of that? Which of us would dare submit himself to the judgment of next century's hindsight in the serene confidence of having all his decisions found wise and correct?

No, we cannot consider sin as involving something within the soul

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of a scientist. Being men and not God, we cannot judge the soul.

Let us then seek a method of judging sin by some objective method that does not require that we see within a man. If we eliminate the possibility of doing deliberate harm to the cause of science itself; then the next step is to consider the possibility of doing harm to mankind.

In the course of advancing knowledge, might it not be possible for a scientist to wreak evil on man? And isn't it much easier to decide whether something will harm man, than whether it will harm something as subtle and abstract as "science."

I think so. And as for advancing knowledge harming man, it is almost impossible for it not to do so in some way. Who would quarrel with the decision that the discovery of means of starting a fire was a great thing for humanity? And yet it gave us arson. The stone axe, the spear, the bow and arrow could all be used to help kill game; and it may be that all were originally devised with that in mind. Unless we're vegetarians (and I am not), we can scarcely object to inventions which make meat more available.

And yet the stone axe, the spear, the bow and arrow, can be and, of course, have been, perverted to the killing of human beings.

Gunpowder, too, is not primarily a killer. It was first invented, it would seem, by the Chinese in the Middle Ages and was used for pyrotechnic purposes only. (We still use it for that on Independence Day in the United States, Guy Fawkes day in Great Britain, and general celebrations everywhere.) But in western Europe in the course of the 14th Century it was put to use in cannons.

A scientist cannot be responsible, then, for the fact that his advance in knowledge can be perverted to harm mankind (though of course he ought to do his humble best to prevent it). As long as there is good to be derived from his contribution, he has a right to hope that it is that good which will be derived from it.

Of course, a scientist might weigh the possible harm against the possible good and decide against his own discovery. Thus, Ascanio Sobrero, an Italian chemist, first prepared nitroglycerine in 1847, was horrified at its explosive properties, and refused to do further work on it out of humanitarian considerations. Alfred Nobel, by mixing nitroglycerine with diatomaceous earth and preparing dynamite, gave mankind something which, for all its destructive potentialities, was extremely useful in all sorts of peaceful and valuable construction work.

In weighing good and bad, there may be misjudgments and blunders, perhaps even crime—but as long as there is the possibility of good, I won't use that ultimately strong word "sin."

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For a scientist to commit a sin, I would have him devise something or uncover knowledge which can *only* do harm and *cannot* do good. What's more, we would have to be reasonably certain that he *knew* it could do only harm and not good, and that he advanced the knowledge or the device in *order* to do harm.

This makes things pretty extreme, and in the entire history of mankind prior to modern times, I can think of only one case that might possibly qualify.

In the 7th Century, an alchemist named Kallinikos (or Callinicus in the Latin spelling) fled from either Syria or Egypt (we don't know which) ahead of the conquering Arab armies and managed to make it to Constantinople.

The Byzantine Empire, of which Constantinople was the capital, was sinking under the hammer-blows of the Arabs, who were fired by their new religion of Islam, and in 673, Constantinople itself was besieged.

Constantinople might conceivably have been taken despite the strength of its walls, for the Arabs were strong by both land and sea. The city was having difficulty feeding itself and morale was low.

But then Callinicus came up with the most remarkable "secret weapon" in the history of military warfare. It was a mixture whose composition is unknown to this day (how's that for a secret!) but which seems to have included naphtha and potassium nitrate so that it would burn with a hot, quick flame. Quicklime (calcium oxide) was also added. It reacted with water to yield intense heat so that the mixture kept burning even while floating on water.

This mixture, called "Greek fire," was launched upon the water in the direction of the Arabic fleet. It set fire to the wooden ships, but what was worse, the spectacle of fire burning on water horrified the Arabs and destroyed their morale. The naval blockade was broken and Constantinople was saved.

Greek fire was purely destructive, and I don't know how it could be turned to constructive use. Callinicus, in inventing it, knew this and devised it for destruction, pure and simple. Yet Callinicus, in doing so, conceived himself to be saving Christianity, and I am sure he thought that harm to Arabs did not count, and that only Christians really mattered as humans.

Ever since, it has been one form of patriotism or another that has tempted the scientist to sin. "Yes," he would think, "we're doing only harm, but we are harming Them in order to save Us, and the good to Us far outweighs the harm to Them." Clearly, though, we cannot al-

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low this as a legitimate argument, for if both sides argue in this fashion, we all die.

To sharpen matters still further, let's take the matter of "sin" a step beyond.

As long as an individual scientist does something which blackens his own name only, the deed is not yet as bad as it might be. But what if what he does not only destroys his reputation but stains the very concept of science itself and blackens every scientist who exists? Now *that* would be sin.

But if so, scientific sin could not truly exist until there was such a thing as a concept of science in the aggregate; of science as a system of thought that transcended the collection of scientists who served that system.

This concept did not really exist in very ancient times. To be sure, individual men of ingenuity have advanced man's control over the environment since earliest times. (Someone invented a scheme for the extraction of copper from its ores, for instance.) However, the diffusion of knowledge was so slow that the discovery was soon divorced from the discoverer, and the very consciousness that there had been a discoverer at all was lost.

Early societies therefore attributed skills and inventions to gods. They were gifts. Thus, the secret of fire was not the first child of man's brain, the proud discovery that made him man—it was simply the gift of Prometheus.

The origin of what we might recognize as secular science was with the ancient Greeks in the 6th Century B.C. The Ionian philosophers, beginning with Thales, were the first to investigate nature without seeking explanations in the whims of the supernatural, the first to advance the concept of the existence of inexorable laws of nature.

But Greek science dwindled and faded out in the last centuries of the Roman Empire, and there followed another period dominated by theology. Even when science began to revive in late Medieval and early Modern times, there was a theological cast about it, so that scientists were considered evil in terms of literal sin.

Roger Bacon was considered a magician in his own times, and shuddering legend was composed of him after his death. The well-known Faust legend was based on the activities of a real alchemist named Faust.

Their deeds were not the sins of scientists but the sins of sorcerers. Their wickedness consisted not in doing harm to man but in making

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use of demonic power. They had improper knowledge of the sort man was not supposed to have.

This old fear of the scientist-as-sorcerer lingered long. As late as the early 1930's, many a science fiction story intoned the grave admonishment, "There are some things it is not given to man to know."

Maybe so, but the implication was that this knowledge was not *given;* it had been *forbidden.* It was the fruit of the tree of knowledge all over again. And as long as the scientist sinned in this sense, his sin was one with that of all mankind; for all men similarly sinned.

It is my belief that mankind generally (at least in the western world) first became aware of science and scientists in a truly secular sense, and even as something in opposition to religion, after 1754 and Franklin's lightning rod (see THE FATEFUL LIGHTNING, June 1969). It was only after 1754 that it would make sense to think of scientific sin in non-theological terms and imagine some deed that would blacken science out of purely scientific perversion.

In that case, we must come to the conclusion that scientific sin could only properly be spoken of as potentially existing after 1754. We can throw out the one doubtful case of Greek fire then and ask ourselves the specific question: Was there scientific sin after 1754?

To me the answer is, quite clearly: Yes!

For a long period after 1754—throughout the 19th Century indeed —science was generally considered the hope of humanity. Oh, there were people who thought this particular scientific advance or that was wicked, and who objected to anesthetics, for instance, or to the theory of evolution, or, for that matter, to the Industrial Revolution —but science in the abstract remained good.

How different it is today! There is a strong and growing element among the population which not only finds scientists suspect, but is finding evil in science in the abstract.

It is the whole concept of science which (to many) seems to have made the world a horror. The advance of medicine has given us a dangerous population growth; the advance of technology has given us a growing pollution danger; a group of ivory-tower, head-in-the-clouds physicists have given us the nuclear bomb; and so on and so on and so on.

But at exactly which point in time did the disillusionment with the "goodness" of science come? When did it start?

Could it have come at the time when some scientist or scientists

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demonstrated the evil in science beyond any doubt; showed mankind a vision of evil so intense that not only the scientist himself but all of science was darkened past the point where it could be washed clean again?

When was the sin of the scientist committed, then, and who was the scientist?

The easy answer is the nuclear bomb, which Oppenheimer referred in his remark on sin.

But I say no. The nuclear bomb is a terrible thing that has contributed immeasurably to the insecurity of mankind and to its growing distrust of science, but the nuclear bomb is not pure evil.

To develop the nuclear bomb, physicists had to extend, vastly, their knowledge of nuclear physics generally. That has led to cheap radioisotopes that have contributed to research in science and industry in a hundred fruitful directions; to nuclear power stations that may be of tremendous use to mankind, and so on. Even the bombs themselves can be used for useful and constructive purposes (as motive power for spaceships, for one thing). And missiles, which might have hydrogen bombs attached, might also have spaceships attached.

Besides, even if you argue that the development of the nuclear bomb *was* sin, I still reply that it wasn't the first sin. The mistrust of science itself antedates the nuclear bomb. That bomb intensified the mistrust but did not originate it.

I find a certain significance in the fact that the play "R.U.R." by Karel Capek was first produced in 1921.

It brought the Frankenstein motif up to date. The original "Frankenstein," published a century earlier in 1818, was the last thrust of theological, rather than scientific, sin. In its Faustian plot, a scientist probed forbidden knowledge and offended God rather than man. The monster who in the end killed Frankenstein could easily be understood as the instrument of God's vengeance.

In "R.U.R.," however, the theological has vanished. Robots are created out of purely scientific motivation with no aura of "forbiddenness." They are tools intended to advance man's good the way the railroad and the telegraph did; but they got out of hand and in the end the human race was destroyed.

Science could *get out of hand!*

The play was an international success (and gave the word "robot" to the world and to science fiction), so its thesis of science-out-of-hand must have touched a responsive chord in mankind.

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Why should men be so ready, in 1921, to think that science could get out of hand and do total evil to the human race, when only a few years before, science was still the "Mr. Clean" that would produce a Utopia if allowed to work?

What happened shortly before 1921?—World War I happened shortly before 1921.

World War II was a greater and deadlier war than World War I, but World War I was incomparably more stupid in its details.

Men have made colossal misjudgments in a moment of error and may make more to come. Some day, someone will push the wrong button, perhaps, in a moment of panic or lack of understanding, and destroy the world; but never has constant, steady stupidity held sway for weeks, months and years as among the military leaders of World War I. For *persistent* stupidity, they will never be approached.

A million men and more died at Verdun. Sixty thousand British soldiers died *in a single day* on the Somme while generals thought they could build a bridge of mangled flesh across the trenches.

Everything about the carnage was horrible, but was there anything that managed to make itself felt above that sickening spectacle of mutual suicide? Was it the new explosives used in unprecedented quantities; the machine guns; the tanks? They were only minor developments of old devices. Was it the airplane, first used in battle, in this war? Not at all! The airplane was actually admired, for it was in itself beautiful, and it clearly had enormous peacetime potential.

No, no! If you want the supreme horror of the war, here it is:

On April 22, 1915, at Ypres, two greenish-yellow clouds of gas rolled toward the Allied line at a point held by Canadian divisions.

It was poison gas, chlorine. When the clouds covered the Allied line, that line caved in. The soldiers fled; they had to; and a 5-mile opening appeared.

No gap like that had been seen anywhere before on the Western Front, but the Germans muffed their opportunity. For one thing, they hadn't really believed it would work and were caught flat-footed. For another, they hesitated to advance until the cloud had quite dissipated.

The Canadians were able to rally, and after the clouds drifted away, their line re-formed. By the time of the next gas attack, all were prepared and the gas mask was in use.

That was *the* horror of World War I, for before the war was over, poison gases far more horrible than the relatively innocuous chlorine were put into use by both sides.

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So grisly was the threat of poison gas, so insidious its onset, so helpless its victims; and, what's more, so devastatingly atrocious did it seem to make war upon *breathing*—that common, constant need of all men—that after World I gas warfare was outlawed.

In all of World War II, poison gas was not used, no matter what the provocation, and in wars since, even the use of tear gas arouses violent opposition. Military men argue endlessly that poison gas is really humane; that it frequently incapacitates without killing or inflicting permanent harm; that it does not maim horribly the way shells and bullets do. People nevertheless will not brook interference with breathing. Shells and bullets might miss; one might hide from them. But how escape or avoid the creeping approach of gas?

And what, after all, is the other side of poison gas? It has only *one* use: to harm, incapacitate and kill. It has *no* other use. When World War I was over and the Allies found themselves left with many tons of poison gas, to what peaceful use could those tons be converted? To none. The poison gas had to be buried at sea or disposed of clumsily in some other fashion. Was even theoretical knowledge gained? No!

Poison gas warfare was developed knowingly by a scientist with only destruction in mind. The only excuse for it was patriotism, and is that enough of an excuse?

There is a story that during the Crimean War of 1853-1856, the British government asked Michael Faraday, the greatest living scientist of the day, two questions: 1) Was it possible to develop poison gas in quantities sufficient to use on the battlefield? And 2) would Faraday head a project to accomplish the task?

Faraday said "Yes" to the first and an emphatic "No" to the second. He did not consider patriotism excuse enough. During World War I, Ernest Rutherford of Great Britain refused to involve himself in war work, maintaining that his research was more important.

In the name of German patriotism, however, poison gas warfare was introduced in World War I, and it was the product of science. Poison gas was invented by the clever chemists of the German Empire. The gas poisoned not only thousands of men, but the very name of science. For the first time, millions became aware that science could be perverted to monstrous evil, and science has never been the same again.

Poison gas was the sin of the scientist.

And can we name the sinner?

Yes, we can. He was Fritz Haber, an earnest German patriot of the most narrow type, who considered nothing bad if it brought good (according to his lights) to the Fatherland. (Alas, this way of

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thinking is held by too many people of all nations.)

Haber had developed the "Haber process," which produced ammonia out of the nitrogen of the air. The ammonia could be used to manufacture explosives. Without that process, Germany would have run out of ammunition by 1916, thanks to the British blockade. With that process, she ran out of food, men, and morale, but never out of ammunition. This, however, will scarcely qualify as a scientific sin, since the process can be used to prepare useful explosives and fertilizers. During the war, however, Haber labored to develop methods of producing poison gas in quantity and supervised that first chlorine attack.

His reward for his unspotted devotion to his nation was a most ironic one. In 1933, Hitler came to power and, as it happened, Haber was Jewish. He had to leave the country and died in sad exile within the year.

That he got out of Germany safely was in part due to the labors of Rutherford, who moved mountains to rescue as many German scientists as he could from the heavy hand of the Nazi psychopaths. Rutherford personally greeted those who reached England, shaking hands with them in the fraternal comradeship of science.

He would not, however, shake hands with Haber. That would, in his view, have been going too far, for Haber, by his work on poison gas, had put himself beyond Rutherford's pale.

I can only hope that Rutherford was not reacting out of offended national patriotism, but out of the horror of a scientist who recognized scientific sin when he saw it.

Even today, we can still recognize the difference. The men who developed the nuclear bombs and missile technology are not in disgrace. Some of them have suffered agonies of conscience, but they know, and we all know, that their work can be turned to great good, if only all of us display wisdom enough. Even Edward Teller, in so far as his work may result in useful fusion power some day, may be forgiven by some his fatherhood of the H-bomb.

But what about the anonymous, hidden people, who in various nations, work on nerve gas and on disease germs? To whom are they heroes?

To what constructive use can nerve gas in ton-lot quantities or plague bacilli in endless rows of flasks be put?

The sin of the scientist is multiplied endlessly in these people, and for their sake—to make matters theological once again—all mankind may yet be cursed.

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After nine years of accomplishment and discovery, the Eleutheran colony was still dependent on a set of rigid, uncompromising instructions from a committee of experts long dead. Could one man—angered beyond endurance—break the stifling pattern?

DIASPORA

by Robin Scott

IT WAS ORDERS DAY. FOR THE twelfth time since the last hour out on the fringe of the solar system, Captain Angleton would assemble the colonists, speak in his orotund way a few words of hope and encouragement, drone a nonsectarian prayer, and then—with a reverent silence that seemed to DiFillipo to grow more and more pompous with each year—open the metraculite case with the coming year's Orders Tape and play it for the hushed, grey remnant of humanity he commanded.

Because of the discrepancy between Earth's year and the much longer Eleutheran year, Orders Day was a movable feast. This time it came early in the lush Eleutheran spring. But whatever its season, it was the worst day in the year for DiFillipo. At first, on the ship and then on the new planet, he hadn't minded so much. Then, he had been preoccupied with the miracle of his family's survival, a survival he had had no reason to expect. Then too, he had been awed by the men who surrounded him, the young Nobel prize-winning scientists, the professors, the doctors, the musicians and artists, the educated, cultured, vigorous cream of humanity.

Angelo DiFillipo had been the owner and operator of a small tavern in Pittsburgh. Like most men of only moderate schooling, he mistakenly credited men of learning with more than their share of wisdom. Who was he, he had

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thought, to question the value and *rightness* of a system to which all these others so readily conformed?

But later, after the landing, after the construction of the perimeter and the first harvest and the birth of the first baby conceived on Eleuthera and the drilling of the first successful gas well, after the successful impregnation of an Eleutheran cow with modified Brahma sperm, after the first pile made with Eleutheran ores went critical and the colony converted from chemical power—after nine years of accomplishment and the discovery that the planet was far more benign than could have been anticipated—after all this, that the colony should remain totally dependent on every word of rigid, uncompromising instructions from a committee of experts long dead in the gaseous tail of the comet, from a computer complex long corroded and silent, angered DiFillipo almost beyond endurance.

But on this Orders Day the anger was gone, replaced by a mixture of excitement and fear. DiFillipo stood at dawn in front of the family cube, planning the day to come. By nature not a very introspective man, he took note of his mixed emotions, compared them with similar feelings in the past on occasions when he was about to take a serious gamble, and filed them away in his mind under "familiar, to be expected, unlikely to cause trouble."

Tommy, DiFillipo's sixteen-year old son, came out of the cube into the warm spring dawn. "Good morning, dad."

"Hey, hey! Whadda ya say, tiger!" DiFillipo whirled into a crouch and jabbed playfully at his tall, straight son. He was immensely proud of Tommy, but like all fathers of sixteen-year olds, he was no longer entirely at ease about their relationship. You can't hug a sixteen-year old son; neither can you shake hands with him.

Tommy crouched into a boxer's stance and jabbed with his left the way DiFillipo had taught him. They sparred for a few moments in the golden dawn until Tommy, half a head taller than DiFillipo with a reach to match, landed an exuberant blow in his father's solar plexus. They broke, breathless and laughing, to watch the sun come up.

"You sleep good, tiger?"

"Yeah. Pretty good. I had trouble getting to sleep, though."

"You're excited about today," said DiFillipo. "I am too."

They stood together and looked off to the west where the sky was still the color of deep Gulfstream water. In the heavy atmosphere of Eleuthera, the impending sunrise in the east was too bright to watch with comfort. Tommy shuffled in the fresh red grass, hands in pockets, the way sixteen-year old boys shuffle. DiFillipo spat the way men spit.

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"Hey!" said Tommy.

"Hey!" said DiFillipo at the same time. They laughed and DiFillipo nodded up at his son. "Go ahead."

"Hey, dad. See the two *Krysters* on the 'ceptor? I bet the one on the west flies off before the one on the east."

DiFillipo frowned slightly. He'd warned the boys about calling the small, green birds *"Krysters."* It was a natural-enough name for a bird whose call was "kee-rist! kee-rist!" but Angleton and company saw the name as blasphemous. Still, they were alone, and it *was* the right name. DiFillipo's frown smoothed. "You're on," he said. "How much?"

Tommy thought very hard. His father had always told him: "Don't bet *just* for fun. Make it worthwhile. Taking a gamble can be the most important thing you do."

"My new rifle against your guitar."

It was DiFillipo's turn to think. It was a safe bet; both articles would stay in the family. And since his eyes were too poor to let him be much of a shot and Tommy couldn't play a note on the guitar, only *de jure* ownership would change. "Okay," he said.

They watched the birds edge back and forth along the slim, grey horizontal waveguide of the power receptor atop the cube. The upper limb of the sun broke over the eastern horizon. Golden light swelled, pushing across the zenith into the indigo of the west. The bird on the east said: "Kee-rist!" The bird on the west cocked its head, teetered for a moment, and sprang off to flutter down into the mist along the road. "Kee-rist! Kee-rist! Kee-rist!" it said.

Tommy grinned at his father. DiFillipo said, "It's packed up. I'll give it to you when we get to the place."

The twins came out, stumbling and bumping into each other like bear cubs, their hair uncombed, their eyes full of sleep. "G'morning, daddy," said Chris. Alex, the silent one, sat wordlessly on the doorstep and pulled his twelve-year old's collection of treasures from his pocket. They tossed for first throw, and Chris got the dice. DiFillipo picked his way across the doorstep and into the cube. Alex was saying: "In with two ball bearings and my knife, and a almost new holo says you don't make the four."

"It is a good bet," thought DiFillipo.

In the kitchen, Terry was frying meal and the coffee was perking. "I am going to miss coffee," thought DiFillipo. As he had every morning for seventeen years, he put his arms around Terry from behind and kissed her in the little hollow below her left ear. As she had every morning for seventeen years, Terry said, "Oh you Flip,

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cut it out; I'll burn breakfast," and then turned to kiss him with a fervor that still surprised and pleased him.

Terry had been the great prize in DiFillipo's life: the drunken, suicidal Vassar girl, abandoned by her musician-lover, night after night at the bar, drinking in desperate silence, and then the first few words, his attempt to reach her because she looked like a nice kid and he felt sorry for the mess she was in, and then the evenings when she had stayed after the tavern was closed, the slowly blossoming love . . .

DiFillipo sat at the table and watched Terry bustle. "I'm going to miss coffee," he said. "Even this chemfab stuff."

"Me too," said Terry, dealing meal cakes on five metal plates. "But I've got enough laid back to last quite a while. Maybe by then we can work out something . . ."

"Sure. I'll bet we've got some kind of a trade set up within a year."

"How much?"

DiFillipo considered the bet. "How about I build you the dressing table you want against you knit me a new sweater?"

"With a mirror?"

"If I can swipe one."

"Okay." Terry wiped her hands on a towel and fished out of her robe pocket the little notebook she used to record their bets. She made the entry and thumbed back through a dozen pages to an earlier entry. "Today's the day," she said. "I guess I'll owe you the dishes for a month."

DiFillipo saw the little worry lines in Terry's forehead. She was frightened, too. He laughed with a calm he did not feel and pulled her onto his lap. "Let's wait and see; we aren't there yet. Anyway, there aren't going to be many dishes for the next month or so."

"Oh, I know you." Terry prodded him lightly in the sternum, keeping her voice bantering, as anxious as he to hide their fear. "You'll collect later when there *are* dishes to do."

Terry's reference to a someday future, a someday when life would once again be normal, the gamble over, pleased DiFillipo and reassured him. He pulled his wife against his shoulder, and they kissed and nuzzled in the quiet, habitual way of long-time lovers, until the boys, hungry, abandoned their crap game and came sniffing in after breakfast.

A little after ten, DiFillipo and Tommy headed for the Center, leaving Terry and the twins to the final packing. Their cube was far out on the perimeter, a thousand meters from the shops, the storehouse, the remains of the dismantled ship, and Administration. Angleton had moved them out there three years before, when he had discovered DiFillipo's still and

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learned of the Wednesday-night poker games DiFillipo had organized. There had been a painful confrontation the next morning; it had been DiFillipo's first direct contact with the aloof and stern Angleton. As he walked with Tommy, he recalled the scene, how he had been ushered into Angleton's austere office, how he had been tongue-lashed by the old man with a kind of Old Testament dignity and fury, how finally Angleton had dismissed Kovacs and the others and spoken to him alone.

"DiFillipo," he had said, his lips tight, "I know about you. I know your selection was fraudulent. I know you don't belong. You are the sort of man who is worse than worthless to the colony. You and your family should have been purged with the rest of them. You have taken up space that should have gone to any one of a million other families."

DiFillipo had tried to object at this point, but his words had been cut off in the old man's rising voice.

"I curse you, DiFillipo! I curse you for the man you are and the fact that you would infect this colony with what should have died with you on Earth. I cannot dispose of you; it would serve no purpose now; I cannot take human life needlessly. But I warn you, I will not hesitate to destroy you if you ever again threaten the discipline of my command!" There had been thunder in his voice.

DiFillipo had been shaken. He had tried again to argue. "My God! Captain Angleton. It was just a harmless . . ."

"Do not take His name in vain in my presence!" the old man had thundered.

"But it was just a little whiskey and a friendly game . . . I mean, men gotta have some kind of relaxation . . ."

Angleton's voice had dropped to a hiss. "You diverted grain for unauthorized purposes. You would corrupt and defile. You, who are worthless, would lead fine men into the paths of corruption!"

DiFillipo had given up then, shaken by the old man's tirade, shaken by his own sudden sense of inferiority. Maybe Angleton was right. Maybe it was an evil thing. Later, when he had regained his objectivity, when he could even laugh a little wryly at the old man's mesmeric intensity, at himself, at the mountain-out-of-a-molehill scene it had been, he tried to explain to Terry how Angleton had affected him. "He has this sort of atmosphere about him, this kind of *strength*. No, that's not it, not all of it. He's . . ."

"Gaullistic?" suggested Terry. "You know, like that old French president before the war? He looks a little like him."

"Yeah. Maybe. He's tall, and that white hair . . . It's just that

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you know he's a little bit nuts, but when he's talking to you, you think *you're* nuts and he's right. He *projects* somehow . . ."

His face warm with the recollection, DiFillipo returned to the present. It was still three hours until Angleton would play the Orders, but people were already gathering in little grey knots. Tommy's brilliant red sweater and DiFillipo's yellow-checked shirt were the only spots of color in the drab compound. No one greeted them as they walked along, but one or two men in each knot, watchful for monitors, winked at DiFillipo, their mouths silently working the name "Flip", or waved carefully, surreptitiously, one arm stiff down the side, one hand extended out from the thigh. DiFillipo was careful not to embarrass anyone by acknowledging winks or waves.

Despite the reserve and drabness of the people, there was excitement in the air. As usual, there had been rumors for weeks that *this* Orders Day would be different, that this time—with the colony so very well established, with the storehouse bulging with food, with tons of undistributed goods the unexpected benignity of the planet had rendered surplus—there might be some loosening of restrictions, some nod in the direction of minor luxuries, a shorter work-week, the toleration of more spontaneous recreation and entertainment to supplement the dry diet of chess tourneys, lectures and formal concerts by the ever more stale virtuosi among the company.

There was such vain hope every year. Never mind that no one could possibly know the contents of the Tapes locked up in their metraculite case. Never mind that the Orders, prepared by men who had planned for the worst, had always called for more of the same: "Carry on . . . Hope of Mankind . . . Maximum Efficiency . . . No Margin for Error." There was always speculation that things might change, that life might lighten, that the paradise of plenty all could see might be permitted them. DiFillipo wasn't the only member of the colony who felt stifled by regulations, bored by sameness, frustrated by enforced conformity and needless austerity.

Father and son went first to the vehicle shed and slipped in unobserved. It was deserted, and all the tractors were in their stalls. DiFillipo had drilled Tommy on the procedure, and the boy went to work removing the plug-in frequency-control crystals from the tractors' power receptors. DiFillipo headed for the colony's fleet of four rotary-wing aircraft. Like the tractors, they were primitive machines designed to operate initially with internal combustion engines until the colony had established a power production and radiation system of sufficient range

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to power them on over-the-horizon flights. They were hardly the latest machines of their type at the time the colonists had left Earth, but they were simple and rugged, well within the capabilities of the colony's limited machine-shop facilities to keep them running indefinitely. It took DiFillipo only a few minutes with each machine to remove the pitch-control valve body, and he started down the line of sixty tractors to meet Tommy working from the other end.

They dumped their harvest of valve bodies and crystals into a wooden box, waited at the door until no one was in sight, and carrying the box between them, slipped across the narrow roadway between the vehicle shed and the warehouse. It too was deserted. By now, very nearly every one of the colony's six hundred and some residents was in the Center, waiting for Captain Angleton, the playing of the Orders, the award of recognitions for the previous year's work, the distribution of extra rations and the great, solemn community feast that would follow.

Inside the warehouse, DiFillipo and Tommy rifled shelves and drawers of all their spare valve bodies and receptor crystals. After nine years as a storekeeper, the only work for which Angleton had thought him suitable, DiFillipo knew where every piece and part in the warehouse was. They went to work then with a sealer and a stack of empty number-ten vacupacs labeled: BEANS, BLACK: 8TH GROWING YEAR. ELEUTHERAN-ADAPTED VARIETY #2765. In half an hour they had sealed up their plunder in the bean pacs. It took them another half an hour to carton the pacs, seal the cartons and slip them deep into a stack of several hundred similar cartons. It would take Angleton and his security men a good long time to find the spares, and until they did, or could manufacture new parts, the security force would be immobile and the family would be long gone. Or so DiFillipo hoped.

It was well past noon when they had finished. A peek out the window revealed the Center now packed with grey-clad colonists —men, women and subdued, disciplined children—standing in quiet groups, reserved, doing a good job of hiding their tensions. DiFillipo had long since gathered up and carried off to the cache site nearly everything he could think of they would need, but he loaded Tommy and himself with anything in the warehouse that took his fancy: a spare pair of pliers, a dozen packages of needles, a small transceiver and a spare battery pack, a five-pound box of sixteen-penny nails, a pair of welder's goggles. It was useless stuff, perhaps, but he didn't know when he might have another chance to take a crack at an unguarded warehouse.

Just as they were about to leave,

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he remembered his bet with Terry that morning and pried the dural mirror from the washroom door. "I just might need it," he thought.

They left through the rear door with their arms full. Keeping the warehouse between them and the Center, they made their way out across the now-deserted compound to the perimeter and the cube.

Terry and the twins had finished the packing, and DiFillipo and Tommy dumped their loot on the pile just inside the door of the cube. While Terry made up sandwiches, DiFillipo and the boys horsed the four neoprene-tired wheels up out of their hiding place in the pit below the stoop and fitted them to the axle and whiffletree that had spent the long winter lashed up under the parents' broad bed. Then they carried out the metal bed frame itself and dropped its legs into the holes in the axles. They had never fully assembled their wagon before, but everything fit together well, and DiFillipo was pleased. They had a sturdy vehicle big enough to hold all they had to carry to the cache and yet light enough to be pushed and steered without difficulty.

While the boys loaded the wagon, DiFillipo went into the now barren cube. Terry was on her hands and knees, checking for overlooked articles under Tommy's bed. DiFillipo gave her a friendly swat and sat down beside her on the floor.

"I *guess* that's everything," said Terry, distracted by the rush of packing. "I hope we haven't forgotten anything."

"Don't worry. It won't matter if we have."

Terry straightened and turned to sit by her husband, her forehead again furled with concern. "That's all right for you to say," she said with some acerbity, "but all my life it seems like I've been stuck with half a pair of socks or a vacuum cleaner without a hose or something, and there won't be anything I can do about it now." She was serious.

DiFillipo laughed and immediately realized he should not have. "Come on, babe. It'll be okay."

Terry cracked a little. She buried her head in his chest. Tears came. "Oh, my God, Flip. I'm scared."

DiFillipo made comforting noises and patted a shoulder blade. "Don't worry," he said. "It'll be okay."

"But what if he comes after us? What'll we do? Remember what he told you that morning? What if he comes after us?" Tension and fatigue brought deep sobs to Terry's voice.

Her fear drove his out. "Don't worry," he said. "He hasn't got anything to come after us with, and he won't for a good long time to come. And when he does, there isn't much he can do. He's no murderer. We'll be okay." His

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voice carried far more confidence than he felt, and suddenly he was struck with doubt, horrified at the gamble he was forcing on his family. What if he were wrong? What if Angleton's Old Testament madness turned him into a "jealous and vengeful" commander? "Jealous and vengeful;" he could recall a priest's voice from his childhood.

Terry was suddenly calm, her emotional storm past. It was just in time for DiFillipo. She straightened and rose. "Don't pay any attention to me, Flip. I'm just being silly. I've never liked moving."

Her new mood saved him and he drove fear from himself like a man with a whip and a chair in a cage. "Yeah," he said, forcing laughter, "I remember that move from Homewood to the place on Astor Street. Remember? When we lost the tray from Tommy's highchair?"

"Gee, yes. And the movers broke the leg off that old holo we had, and I thought it was the end of the world."

Terry's last phrase struck them both. They grinned at each other and broke into honest laughter. "It pretty nearly was, babe."

They started out, Terry walking before with the wagon tongue under her arm, DiFillipo and the boys furnishing the motive power. They kept the cube between them and the Center until they had topped the first rise beyond the perimeter; then they followed the dirt road leading out to the south quadrant, past the last of the cultivated land and onto the vast crimson grasslands that stretched in gently undulating swells to the distant horizon. The sun was warm on their backs and they perspired freely on uphill stretches. But the grass was fresh and the vehicle light; they would be hard to track beyond the cultivated land.

By four o'clock they had made a good ten kilometers, halfway to the cache, and they stopped under the shade of a giant *Garanth* tree to rest. DiFillipo knew the place well, and as the family sprawled out in the shade to eat their sandwiches, he thought of the fifty or so times he had broken his nighttime trips to the cache site there.

Tommy, who had accompanied him on many of those trips, was thinking the same thoughts. "Remember the time we carried the tractor turbine housing out?" he said.

"I sure do," said DiFillipo.

"I don't think we ever carried anything out that was heavier, did we dad?"

"No, tiger. I guess not. Unless it was that time you bet me you could carry more fuel cans than I could."

Tommy laughed a proud laugh. "I won though, didn't I."

DiFillipo gave him the arched eyebrow for crowing over winning

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a bet, but when the boy's face fell, he smiled. "You sure did, son."

They finished their sandwiches and went over the area to pick up any revelatory remnants of their stay. DiFillipo sent Chris shinnying up the *Garanth* to look behind them to the east. The boy saw nothing, and the growing flame of fear in DiFillipo burned a little lower. He tried to imagine the scene back at the Center: the whole colony would be seated at long, board tables, eating in silence and listening, perhaps, to Angleton's pious exhortations. The old man would be standing there, tall at the head of the Captain's Table, his eyes too bright, his lips too red, his words rumbling, hypnotic, through the Center. But the earlier excitement would be dissipated, and as they ate, the colonists would realize that it was to be just another year of the same colorless, sober, efficient life, no waste, no diversion, nothing left to chance. In a few moments, the Orders Day feast would be over; everyone would retire to his own quarters for the prescribed evening of meditation. There would be no work that evening; with luck, no one would discover until the next morning that the tractors and aircraft had been rendered immobile, and after a night of dew and wind, the family's trail across the grasslands would have disappeared.

By sundown, the family was within a kilometer of the cache site, and DiFillipo urged the boys on with breathless jokes, snatches of song, and verbal horseplay. The terrain was growing rougher, more wooded. There were more streams to ford, more sharp hillocks up which to push the wagon, and then, legs straining, down which to slow its descent. With the last light in the western sky, Tommy made out the dense clump of conifers and the jutting rock rib that marked the cache. They fumbled the last few hundred meters in almost complete darkness until Tommy, who had gone on ahead in the blackness, called back in a low voice: "Here it is, dad. This way. We're here."

Terry and DiFillipo got out blankets and spread them under the heavy farm wagon which—like the tractor—had been carried out piece by piece and assembled at the cache site. There was little fear of predators at that altitude, but DiFillipo wished they could have a fire. He seriously considered it for a moment as Terry passed out more sandwiches; there was plenty of fuel at hand. But something held him back. It was always possible that they had missed a valve body or that someone had seen them leave and a search party was even then setting out after them. Even among the trees, a fire might be spotted a long way off.

Terry and DiFillipo huddled together under the blankets. It

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was not very cold, but it felt good to be together like that. On the other side of him, DiFillipo felt a small, wiry body hunch over to touch, and he would have bet there were two more beyond that one, touching. He started to say something softly to Terry about it, about the five of them there and what it meant to be a family and to be free together like that from the stifling atmosphere of the colony, but he realized from her deep, even breathing that she was already asleep. He envied her the sleep, and then he was glad she could sleep so readily, and he took reassurance from her calmness.

And lying there waiting for sleep, he was suddenly filled with a curious mixture of emotions: exultation that they had made it that far, exultation that the damn bed had fitted the holes in the axles, pride in the performance of the boys during the day, quiet pleasure at the prospect of being out from under the daily desperation and boredom and *waste* of life in the colony, exhilaration at the prospect of making his own way once more, free of Angleton and his directives and his puritanical devotion to efficiency, free of the cold, dead hands of the planners. His fear and his sense of guilt at the gamble he was taking with his family's fortunes died to a small ember, a dim spark smothering in a new, calm optimism; and he slept.

He was still possessed with a mood of mild optimism when he awoke the next morning to the first whistle of a *siva* bird. The world was still grey and he could just barely make out the green plastic shroud covering the tractor ten meters away. He let the others sleep and crept to the verge of the woods to watch the sky lighten into dawn and—just in case—to take a good long look to the east. He squatted, his back to the gnarled trunk of an Earth-like pine. The sky was lightening rapidly, the way it does in Eleuthera, with its heavy atmosphere, and the first glint of gold was rimming a stand of tall timber a kilometer or so off. He wished he had a cigarette. After twelve years of no smoking, he wished he had a cigarette, and he resolved once again—as soon as they had established themselves at the place—to experiment with some of the indigenous plants to see if he could find something smokable.

And then, without conscious direction, as it had so often done in the past when he had been faced with some small matter of self-denial, his mind rehearsed his well-worn sense of gratitude at his family's survival. Somewhere deep in his psyche, Angelo DiFillipo believed he ought to feel guilty, not just for his defection from the colony or his inability to conform which had triggered it, but for all sorts of things: for be-

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ing the kid in the block who wouldn't go along with the gang; for being the guy at school who had told the dean to go stuff it; for being the cat in the company who had brought charges against Lt. Philbrick and lost weekend passes for everyone; for being the licensee who had challenged the State Liquor Inspector and nearly lost his permit for his trouble—most of all, for his being alive in the first place.

Every last one of the original four hundred Eleutheran colonists had been chosen after the most exhaustive screening in the history of the race. As soon as the destruction of Earth had been clearly foreseeable, the process had begun; all of human resources could produce only one ship capable of making the long flight to newly discovered Eleuthera with the tremendous tonnage of goods necessary to insure the survival of a colony and—at the same time—carry the minimum number of people to assure an adequate genetic pool. Competition had been extreme. Candidates had been screened for intelligence, accomplishment, physical characteristics, emotional stability, genetic makeup. No one was given serious consideration unless he was very nearly perfect, with a very nearly perfect wife (only married couples were chosen) and very nearly perfect children. Even then, there had been an immense lottery to chose the four hundred from the many hundreds of thousands of qualified people.

But DiFillipo had not been screened. He had drawn no lottery ticket. His eyes were bad; his education had gone no farther than three years at a community college; he had had a reputation as a troublemaker, a barracks lawyer in the army; he had a minor criminal record (breech of the peace in the '04 student riots in Pittsburgh—suspended sentence; gaming and operating a book—thirty days in the Allegheny County Workhouse in '06; liquor-license violation—five-hundred dollar fine in '09). His mother had spent six months in an asylum (mild schizophrenia). His father had died of silicosis complicated by chronic alcoholism. *Terry's* father had been a diabetic. Tommy had been born a month premature. The twins had both suffered postnatal jaundice (Bilyrubin Factor of 18 and 19). The family was far from perfect.

But so, apparently, had been the selection committee. DiFillipo had never understood just what had happened, why he and his family, imperfect as they were, had been selected. It could have been simply a computer error; the most perfect systems make mistakes, and in the rush and chaos of Earth's final days, such a mistake might have gone unnoticed. However, he had long suspected

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—to the point of virtual certainty —that his selection was no accident, that it had been the direct result of his tavern. The *Green Door* had been that kind of a place, quiet, discreet, a meeting and trysting place for men of position and wealth. And after eight years behind the bar, DiFillipo had gotten to know quite a large number of men of power and influence, many of them important figures on the national and international scene. More important, he had *heard* a great deal, had heard, for example, about the odd relationship between Senator Stackpoole and the Eurofed Chancellor when they had been students together in Heidelberg, had heard about certain stock market manipulations which had made a National Committeeman, a Soviet diplomat and the President of the United States exceedingly wealthy men.

When the news of the colony selection process broke, DiFillipo briefly considered trying to cash in on his information, but rejected the notion almost immediately. With everything coming to an end anyway, with the churches full and rioting in the streets, who would worry enough about his reputation to pull levers for Angelo DiFillipo? And anyway, it would be a stinking thing to do.

And so they were pretty well resigned, he and Terry. Sorry, really, only for the fact that the boys had not had much of a chance. As the time drew near, DiFillipo even found himself growing curiously jovial, amused at the wilder gyrations of those about him, solacing himself with the thought that just about as much evil would perish with the Earth as good.

And then one evening, just before closing, when he was enlarging on that point with a man introduced to him only as a Visitor from Washington—he had told the Visitor from Washington—really as much in jest as anything —that since everybody was going to church, maybe he would too and get a lot of things he knew off his chest.

People do strange things when they know they are going to die. Women get dressed in their best clothes and get their hair done. Men get drunk or hunt a woman or go to the office and work on next year's tax figures or—if they are that sort of man—worry about their place in a history book, the last chapter of which is so soon to be written. Some one of these latter, DiFillipo came to suspect, some man implausibly still concerned for his reputation, had gotten the wind up over his jesting threat, and DiFillipo had been visited late one night by a funny little old man and told to report with his family to so-and-so at such-and-such a time. And suddenly there they were in far

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Earth-orbit when the comet's tail swept Earth clean of life, and Captain Angleton opened the First Orders, and the *Hope* shifted on her gimbals, and they all went into narcosis to wake up three years later in far Eleutheran-orbit.

Sitting there in the dawn with his back to the tree, DiFillipo thought: "I should feel guilty, I guess." But with Terry and the boys behind him in the woods and the colony sixteen kilometers off to the east, he didn't.

The rising sun was now beginning to spear into the valley before him, routing patches of thick ground fog. It was time to wake the family and move on. DiFillipo stood, stretched—and froze against the tree. There in the thinning mist, now golden and pink with the sun, was the unmistakable peak of a Mark IV survival shelter. It was no more than two hundred meters off, down in the swale directly below the woods. He couldn't see how many men there were; they were all asleep in the shelter. But he knew the shelter could accommodate four men, and it was probable that Angleton had sent no fewer in each of the parties he had apparently set in pursuit of them.

DiFillipo thought furiously, the ember of fear in him blazing up. They could lie low and hope the searchers would pass them by. But then the family would be tied down indefinitely, their foes ahead of them. He considered creeping back for Tommy and the rifle and jumping the men in the shelter before they awoke. But he did not want to expose Tommy to such violence, nor did he want to see bloodshed. He decided instead to get back to the wagons, get them loaded, and make a run for it before their pursuers were aware of their proximity. He peered down again at the shelter, squinting to focus his eyes better. There was no sign of a vehicle; the theft of crystals had been effective.

He crept back to the wagon and woke Terry and the boys. "Kids, listen to me," he whispered. "There's a party of men just outside the woods. Don't make any more noise than you can help, but get the wagon loaded with the fuel cans. We're going to have to make a break for it."

Tommy pulled his rifle from under his blanket and ran his hand down its stock. "Couldn't we just . . . ?"

"No!" whispered DiFillipo. "If we start something, they could pin us down here until Angleton gets a rotary going. We've got to make a run for it. They haven't got a tractor."

Tommy looked disappointed. DiFillipo slapped him lightly on the shoulder. "Save it. You'll have plenty of wild bullocks to use that thing on."

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He sent Alex, the silent twin, off to the verge of the woods to watch for any movement from the shelter, and then he pitched in to help Terry and Chris pull the fifty-liter fuel cans from under their brushwood cover and heave them up onto the heavily laden farm wagon. Tommy stripped the green plastic cover from the tractor, checked the oil level in the reservoir and swung himself up into the seat to start the turbine and back the drawbar up to the wagon tongue.

"Hold it, Tommy," whispered DiFillipo. "Let's wait until we're sure we're ready. You start that thing now, and those guys will come running."

Alex came back, running silently in the thick carpet of needles. "They're awake, daddy. They've started a fire."

"Okay," said DiFillipo. "Let's get everything lashed down tight. We've got a bumpy road ahead."

They worked with the ropes for ten minutes, and then DiFillipo signaled the boys to help him with the heavy wagon. With considerable effort they got it turned toward the opening into the woods from the west. Then they hitched the lighter, bedstead wagon to the drawbar of the farm wagon, and finally, they pushed the tractor itself to the head of the train and dropped a pin down through the farm wagon tongue and the tractor's drawbar.

DiFillipo was breathless with exertion. "Okay. Everybody get aboard. Tommy, you drive, but take it easy until we reach clear ground. And don't start up until I get back." He wanted one more look at the search party.

He approached the valley to the east cautiously. There were four of them, just stamping out the remains of their breakfast fire. Even at that distance, he could make out Kovacs, Angleton's Chief of Security. There was d'Esperanzo, the Head of Central Services and his former supervisor. There was Krilov, a zoologist and a crack shot; he never came back from a hunting expedition without his bullock. And there was old Macmillan. He'd been a forester in Yellowstone back before the comet. He was their tracker, DiFillipo supposed, and the only man in the party from whom he could hope for a break. Macmillan had been an enthusiastic member of the short-lived poker group.

It was a formidable team, but they had no tractor. If the family could get off fast enough, they might make it. The shelter was now down and packed; the fire was out. DiFillipo had to make tracks. He ran back to the family, praying the tractor would start. It had not been run since the last provisioning expedition, three weeks before. He hoped the battery was up.

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As he approached, breathless, he shouted to Tommy: "Start her up, son. Let's get out of here!" There was a low growl as the starter began to turn the heavy impeller-shaft. The pitch rose with heart-stopping slowness, but then the impeller began to gulp air, the fuel fired imperfectly, black smoke poured from the exhaust. The whine accelerated into the barely audible as the starter disengaged, and Tommy grinned broadly. DiFillipo swung up behind his son as Tommy fed power to the wheels. There was a jerk and a rattle of pins and U-bolts and they were off, too fast, dodging trees, headed for the open plains to the west.

As they cleared the verge of the woods, DiFillipo heard a distant shout over the whine of the turbine. And then another. Tommy shoved the throttle to full and they accelerated with a jerk. There was another shout, and then the thin flat slap of a heavy-caliber slug into a tree just to the left of them. DiFillipo started to shout "Take cover!" and then realized the futility of it. With two thousand litters of volatile fuel aboard, there was no cover. Another slug kicked up dirt ahead and to the right of them. Another whistled frighteningly over their heads. They topped the rise on the far side of the woods and shot down into the valley beyond, out of gunshot. "Okay, son," shouted DiFillipo, his hand on the boy's shoulder. "Slow her down a little. I think we're okay now."

As the tractor slowed, he swung back from the drawbar and up onto the farm wagon, where Terry and the twins sat huddled in a jouncing heap against the mound of fuel cans. He braced himself against the sway of the wagon and looked back up the hill where four men stood silhouetted against the bright morning sky. One of the four, he knew, was Krilov, who never missed his bullock. But he had missed a loaded farm wagon at a range of under two hundred meters. Why? DiFillipo had been a gambler too long to give much credit to luck. He remembered the look on Angleton's face on that morning three years before; the words "jealous and vengeful" rang in his memory. It was hard to believe the old man had given orders to spare them. But then why had Krilov missed? His relief at their escape failed to cool the fear that burned in him, and he stood for many minutes looking back, his face a study in anxiety.

As it turned out, they had ten days at the homesite before Angleton and his men unearthed the pitch-control valve bodies from their hiding place and came out after them.

The family was ready. They had pitched their tent a few me-

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ters from the shore of a deep upland lake which protected them from approach from the east. To the north and south, low cliffs sheltered the valley and would force any aircraft to come in several hundred meters above the homesite. To the west, the broad valley floor curved off to the horizon, on Eleuthera, a good fifteen kilometers off. Any approach would have to come up the valley, and the family, DiFillipo, Terry, and Tommy, stood watches for those first few nights.

During the day, Tommy and DiFillipo planted half-pound charges at fifty-meter intervals across the valley, two hundred meters down from the camp. They had enough wire to run detonators to nine charges, and DiFillipo, after estimating probable landing sites, hoped that would be enough.

Nights are dark on Eleuthera; the single moon is distant, with a low albedo, and the dense atmosphere robs the stars of much of their light. But the same heavy atmosphere transmits sound for great distances; and Tommy woke his father just before first light one morning when the *flup-flup-flup* of the rotary-wing was still barely audible. They left the tent and went to the dugout twenty meters down the valley.

They listened there, ears straining to sort out the sound of the approaching aircraft from the rustling of small animals, the sleepy sounds of night birds, and the susurration of the lake waters. The sound grew louder and then faded, grew louder again and faded. Angleton, or whoever was commanding the aircraft, was flying a search pattern, back and forth, north to south, each track a few miles further west toward the camp. He would be searching with the hunters' tracking bolometer, seeking the telltale traces of large animal heat which, at that altitude, could mean only human beings. The sound grew louder again as Angleton flew a northward leg toward them. Tommy shivered in the cool night air. DiFillipo patted his shoulder. "Don't worry son. They'll find us all right, but they can't fire at blips on a boloscreen. They'll have to wait for light and come down for us."

Angleton's next sweep south took him directly overhead. There was a sudden burst of sound as the rotary-wing cleared the cliffs to the north, and DiFillipo could see the faint blush of the turbine exhaust three hundred meters above them. This time the sound did not fade away; although DiFillipo could no longer see the exhaust, the sound indicated that the rotary-wing had turned and was orbiting a kilometer or so off to the west. The family had been spotted and Angleton was waiting for daylight.

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DiFillipo sent Tommy back to wake his mother and the twins. He wanted them out of the tent and under cover in case Angleton decided to fire at random into their camp. In five minutes, the whole family was in the dugout, and they waited there, together, for dawn.

As ever, the Eleutheran sunrise was spectacular. The family had the advantage of the sun behind them, and the two hundred meters of altitude of the orbiting aircraft made it visible to the watchers on the ground long before they were anything but spots on the boloscreen.

The rotary-wing landed, and DiFillipo tried to make out how many men disembarked. "How many do you see, tiger?"

"Three of them, I think."

"Terry?"

"Yes, Flip. That's right. I think I can see three."

"One left in the rotary, that makes four. Can you see what they're doing?"

Tommy peered down the scope on his rifle. "They're just standing there, dad."

DiFillipo thumbed on the transceiver. He hoped the searchers would be monitoring the colony's common frequency. "Angleton or whoever! This is DiFillipo. Do you read me?"

He released the transmit button. The earpiece crackled with atmospherics. Then: "Okay, DiFillipo. You are to walk toward us with your hands empty. We'll take you and your family back in the rotary and send a party after the gear."

DiFillipo forced calmness into his voice. It was important that his fear not show. "Go back, Angleton. We're staying here. If you come after us, somebody's going to get hurt."

Angleton's voice thundered back through the earpiece; the electronics did little to filter out the Old Testament rasp: "I hereby order you to surrender yourself and your family without further delay!"

"Stuff it, Angleton!"

A new voice came on. It sounded like Kovacs. "Think of your family, man! There are four of us and only one of you! If anybody gets hurt, it will be someone in your family!"

DiFillipo nodded at Tommy. "Put one well off to the left into the rock outcropping there where it will make a lot of racket." Tommy squinted through his scope and fired. The sky was bright behind them; the muzzle flash would be lost in the gold and yellow streamers of the rising sun.

The ricocheting shot whined and clattered in the rocks, and even DiFillipo's poor eyes could detect the sudden movement of the figures near the rotary as Angleton and his party threw themselves to the ground.

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"DiFillipo!" screamed the transceiver, "I warn you. We will destroy you!"

"How close are they to number seven, tiger?" said DiFillipo.

"About twenty; thirty meters."

"Okay. Fire it before they get any closer to it." Tommy fished up two wires tacked to a wooden block with the number "7" penciled on it and applied them to the terminals of the spare battery pack. The blast was spectacular in the oblique morning light. Birds screeched and fluttered up from trees at the top of the cliffs. A half pound of RDX makes a pretty good bang and lifts a good deal of topsoil with it.

DiFillipo waited for the dust to settle and then depressed the transmit button. "Angleton! We can drop the next round in a hell of a lot closer! Clear out of here!"

DiFillipo crossed his fingers and gave Terry a lopsided, worried grin. It all depended on the experience of the men in the rotary. If any of them had been in infantry combat during the war, he would miss the sound of an incoming mortar round and know the explosion had been a pre-positioned mine. But the war had been swift, the number of men with such experience few. There was silence in the valley. The dust cloud from the mine blew and dissipated, the birds settled to their pursuits. Only the quiet, rhythmic swish of the idling rotary came to them in the dugout. The earpiece of the transceiver hummed and crackled softly with a life of its own. They waited. There was no movement from the ground around the rotary.

The hum was broken by Angleton's voice, now restrained and hissing. "All right, DiFillipo. You're not worth it. I won't risk good men to get at scum like you. Stay here, DiFillipo! And be damned!"

There was movement again at the rotary. Its turbine whined and the craft lifted, turned, and rose over the northern cliff. It was lost to sight for a moment, and then reappeared well to the east. The family watched it until it became a tiny dot and its sound had dropped to competition with a far-off Eleutheran cricket. Tommy smiled at his father. Terry rose from the trench and levered herself over the edge with a hand on her husband's shoulder. "I guess I'd better start breakfast," she said, her eyes bright.

DiFillipo straightened and slung the transceiver over his shoulder. "Tommy," he said, "I want you to get started on the plowing today. I want to get the grain in as soon as we can so we can use the tractor to drill the gas well."

"Okay, dad. And I'll bet I can get it done before sundown."

DiFillipo looked at his son skeptically and shook his head.

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"Uh-uh. You'll never make it. Not and disced down too."

"My Hemingway tape against your razor."

DiFillipo looked up at his son, at the light fuzz on his cheeks, and he wanted to put his arm around him and hug. Instead, he swallowed the lump in his throat and held out his hand. "You're on, son. I guess you probably need the razor now, and I don't mind growing a beard."

His beard grew full and luxurious, and DiFillipo didn't begin to trim it back until it obscured his Adam's apple. Terry began to refer to him as "the patriarch," and when he looked at himself in the stolen dural mirror, he took a kind of strength from his own appearance.

The weeks went quickly. The rich, virgin Eleutheran soil brought them heavy crops of adapted wheat and beans. They labored in the fields and in the storage and smoking cave cut deep into the northern cliff. They sawed timber and sodded their expanding cabin. Late in the summer, they drilled for and found—as the planetary geological survey had predicted—plentiful natural gas. The installation of the fuel cells and the power transmitter was arduous and uncertain, but after experimenting with a number of natural filtering materials, they achieved sufficient purity in the gas to allow them to run the cells with only occasional need to de-carbonize the elements. The first evening in early fall when the lumer in the kitchen of their cabin sparked to life, dimmed, and then brightened into full intensity was an evening of wild celebration, and Terry produced a small pac of the harsh, raw whiskey DiFillipo had brewed three years before. He was astonished and touched, and he ceremoniously poured a dram for Tommy, much to the latter's pride, much to the outrage of the younger boys.

When the first snowflakes fell, Tommy and his father left for three days with the tractor, expending the last of their precious chemical fuel on a hunting trip to lower altitudes where bullock flourished. They returned and spent a week dressing and smoking the meat; the next year's tractor-work would be done on radiated power.

The snow fell steadily thereafter, and the lake froze solidly. By winter solstice, DiFillipo had run his first batch through the still, and had begun to experiment with the dozen or so local plants he had collected because they were listed in the botanical survey as possible analogues to *Nicotiana*. His experiments produced more nausea than pleasure, but in time he found a palatable substitute for the real thing, and he set the boys to work fashioning

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pipes from white clay dug from the lake border.

Their first visitor came nearly midway between the winter solstice and spring. It was Macmillan. He had been hunting alone, and as soon as he was recognizable from the dugout to which the family had fled at the first sound of his rotary, DiFillipo saw that he was unarmed and welcomed him into the warmth of the cabin.

With some considerable pride at the admiration he saw in Macmillian's eyes, DiFillipo handed him a full pipe and a toddy and seated him before the roaring log fire in the central room.

Macmillan sipped appreciatively, lighted his pipe, and coughed violently. "Takes a while to get used to this rich living, Flip."

"Yeah. I haven't quite got this tobacco thing licked, but I'll get it."

Macmillan sighed. "Sure as hell better than nothing."

"Maybe if I cure it a little longer, pack it down in sugar . . ."

"Sure. But where you going to get the sugar? You must be running low."

"Oh, no. We got lots," lied DiFillipo. "But I guess we could always use some more. And maybe some salt."

Macmillan cast his canny Scots eye around the room and then stared fixedly at the whiskey in his hand. "Whiskey's a little young. How about ten pounds of sugar a liter?"

"Fifteen."

"And the smokes?"

DiFillipo thought a minute. "One for one. Pounds of salt for ounces of tobacco."

Terry, who had been listening at the kitchen door, thrust her head in the doorway. "Flip! Don't forget the aspirin and cough syrup and psilobennies."

"Okay," said Macmillan wearily. "What else do you need?"

"A pair of sewing scissors," said Terry.

"Some tapes," said Alex from the bedroom.

". . . and holos," said Chris.

"A new 'ceptor for the tractor, dad," said Tommy.

DiFillipo, smiling, handed Macmillan a pencil and a piece of paper. "Better make a list, Mac." Macmillan made a list.

They dined, then, on sweet bullock steak and beans and little Eleutheran cabbages and rich gravy and coarse dark bread. The food, the warmth, the whiskey almost brought tears to Macmillan's eyes, although he laughed a good deal. He left just before sundown. Before he left, DiFillipo asked him: "Mac, back last spring, when you and the others came after us, why didn't Krilov shoot to hit us?"

Macmillan shook his head. "I don't know. I'd like to think it was

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because he was afraid of what I might have done to him if he had hit you, but somehow I kind of doubt it."

Macmillan came back two days later with his rotary full.

He came back again with the summer solstice, but this time afoot: he, his wife, and their two daughters struggling down the northern cliff with heavy packs.

By midsummer, fourteen families had spread out down the valley, and the output capacity of the gas-well fuel-cell radiator had been doubled and doubled again. By autumn, a regular trade system with the mother colony was a *de facto* reality, although Angleton's continuing harassment still made circumspection necessary.

Christmas on Eleuthera is also a movable feast. Well into the third year of "No-Name" (DiFillipo, the unwilling patriach of the valley, had refused it a name, just as he had refused every attempt on the part of the other valley-dwellers to make him their spokesman and leader)—Christmas fell within a week of the autumn equinox. DiFillipo and Terry spent the afternoon and evening with the newlyweds in their sod-and-timber cabin two kilometers down the valley from the lakeside homesite.

It had been a day of mixed pleasure. Kathy Macmillan DiFillipo was a splendid cook and had won praise even from her mother-in-law. But DiFillipo had argued with Tommy about a number of valley problems; it seemed to him that the boy wanted to move too fast, cut out more than he could reasonably accomplish.

Walking back home through the dusk, hand in hand with Terry, DiFillipo worried about his ever more frequent disagreements with Tommy. "I should hold my temper," he said. "Actually, the boy's got some good ideas. It's just that he . . ."

Terry laughed and squeezed his hand. "Quit worrying, patriarch. It's natural enough. Let's face it: when kids grow up and get married, they ought to move out of the old neighborhood, away from their parents *and* their in-laws."

"Yeah. But that's not very practical here."

"Sure. But you'll get used to Tommy, and he'll get used to you."

Still unsettled by the afternoon when they reached home, DiFillipo decided to pause on the porch for a smoke. Terry went on in to fix a late supper for the twins. It was a soft night, full of pleasant smells and comfortable sounds. Far off he could hear the shouts of children. His pipe went out, and he struck a match to relight it. In the dancing light of the flame, he caught a sudden movement in the corner of his eye. He turned to investigate and felt a sudden, sharp pain at the base of

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his neck, between the shoulder blades. The dusk darkened instantly into blackness, and he was falling, and there were hands, and he tried to cry out, and there was motion. And then there was nothing.

Light, bright light, pried at his eyelids. He opened them, squinting. A hand was withdrawing a hypodermic needle from his left forearm. It stung there. The back of his neck was stiff, and he craned his head around and sat up in his chair to ease the cramp. Angleton, white-haired and stern, sat stiffly in a chair across a broad table from him. A hand pulled his head back slightly, not roughly, and a bright light shone in his eyes. A thumb pulled his eyelids back, first one and then the other. "He's okay, Captain Angleton," said a voice. It sounded like Jespers, the head of Medical Services.

Angleton nodded and waved the other man out of the room. "All right, Dr. Jespers. You may go."

DiFillipo sat upright, and as his vision cleared and the dizziness left him, he considered making a dive for Angleton. Then he saw the gun in Angleton's hand.

Angelton spoke: "I'm sorry that we had to do it this way, but I don't think you would have accepted a formal invitation, and the fewer who know we have met like this the better."

DiFillipo found his voice but he didn't know what to say. It occurred to him that if Angleton's purpose was to carry out his old threat to destroy him, he would not now be sitting there little the worse for whatever had been injected into him. With this realization, fear left him and anger came.

"You sonuvabitch," he hissed, rising, "I don't know what the hell you're up to, but I'm walking out that door."

Angleton said, "You're free to go anytime, but as long as you're here, why not hear me out. There are some things you ought to know."

DiFillipo suddenly realized how different Angleton was. Gone was the Old Testament voice; gone were the too-bright eyes and the too-thin lips. There was still hostility in the old man's face, but it was tempered by a kind of reasonableness which his words confirmed. Disarmed and curious, DiFillipo let his anger die. He sat again at the table and nodded. "Okay, I'm listening."

"First," said the old man, "just out of curiosity, how much have you figured out for yourself?"

"Not all of it. Some. You're a phony. For some reason you've done practically nothing to stop emigration to the valley. There are sixty-four families out there now." He could not restrain a touch of pride in his voice. "And

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you could have broken up the guys' trade route if you'd really wanted to."

Angleton nodded. "Is that all?"

"Well, after that first time here in your office, I never did buy all that Biblical bit. I mean, I heard a lot of priests when I was a kid, back at St. Ignatius'. You got the words okay, but the music isn't right. It fooled me for a long time, but I think you're a phony . . ."

"Go on."

"And then when we left here two and a half years ago, when Krilov had a good shot at us and missed, that bothered me for a long time, and worried me because I couldn't figure out why. I'm still not sure why, but I know Krilov, and the only thing that'd keep him from hitting something he shot at would be somebody *telling* him not to. Like maybe you."

Angleton sighed. "Well you've got a piece of it."

"And I guess I've figured these last couple of years that you pretty much *let* us get out of the colony because you didn't want me around making trouble."

"Okay. You're about fifty percent right. I'll give you the whole story in a minute, and I'll tell you why you have to know it. But first, let me tell you something about myself, something no more than two or three in the colony know."

DiFillipo fumbled for and found his pipe and pouch in a jacket pocket. He was glad it had not been broken during his trip into the Center. It was his favorite. He puffed it alive, as Angleton began his revelation. The old man was downright professorial; he reminded DiFillipo of one of his history instructors at Allegheny College, only older and infinitely more weary.

"Before Project Hope started," began Angleton, "I was commander of the lunar research base at Tycho. Before that, before I entered the service back in '02, I'd been a not-very-successful character actor in holovision for three years. It was that combination of experiences that resulted in my selection as commander of the *Hope* and of this colony."

"An actor?"

"Yes, although I never made much of a living at it. It was at least as important as my experience as a Space Force Officer. You must understand, DiFillipo, when they set up the *Hope* project, the committee realized that an isolated colony insufficiently challenged by its environment might soon become hoeplessly stagnant. They needed someone who could play the role of the strong leader, someone who could be dictatorial —if need be—and just a bit irrational. The colony needed an *appearance*; a reality would have been too dangerous."

"I don't get you."

"Look. The planners wanted

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someone who could act and speak and *live* the role of everyone's idea of the Commander: *el Caudillo,* the President, *der Führer,* Comrade Chairman, the Pope, the *Maharishi, il Duce, le Roi,* the Chairman of the Board, all rolled into one. But no one who is really sane makes a really great leader, and no one who was really insane could be entrusted with so much power. No one but an actor could *appear* to be all that and remain sane." Angleton chuckled wryly. "And on that latter point, I don't know that I've always succeeded. Power corrupts in many ways. Even borrowed, secondhand power . . ."

Di Fillipo didn't know whether he was more surprised at what he was being told or at Angleton's display of humor. He even felt a touch of sympathy for the old man. If what he was saying was true, it could not have been a pleasant fifteen years for Angleton.

"It was all programed for me, DiFillipo. All of it."

"But why, Angleton? Why such a leader like that? Why the boredom and why did you hold back on us so much? Why'd you push us so *damn* hard?"

"That's what I'm going to tell you, but you'll have to understand something of the mechanics of colonization.

"First, think of the colonies planted by Europe in North America. Compare them with the later colonies established in India and Africa and Southeast Asia. What was the difference?"

DiFillipo tried to remember his history, and the memory of his Allegheny College professor swam again in his mind. After a moment, like a dutiful student, he looked up at the old man. "Yeah," he said. "I think I see what you mean. The people who settled the Americas, at least the Pilgrims and some of the French, went there because they *had* to, because things were too moldy for them at home . . ."

"Precisely!" said Angleton, growing more and more professorial. "And the *Conquistadores* and the later English colonists in India and Indo-China and much of Africa were *not* refugees from tyranny; they *were* tyranny, tyranny extended with the long arm of imperialism."

"But I don't see how we're like that. God knows, we *had* to leave Earth. Boy, if there ever *were* refugees, we . . ."

"Yes, of course. But it's more than just the motivation of a colonist. Look, here's the real parallel. From the day the Pilgrims left Holland, they were on their own, poorly equipped, facing brutal conditions without any support from mother England. Compare them with the Englishmen who went out to India in the nineteenth century loaded with crea-

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ture-comforts from home, protected by a crack imperial army. It's all very simple: the Pilgrims founded a new society; the English in India founded tiny, inbred enclaves and left after a century and a half of increasing bitterness and frustration. Only in South Africa, where there were national differences among the colonists, did a really viable culture result. And then you know what happened to *it.*"

"Okay. I get you. So you clamped down on us to toughen us up . . ."

The old man shook his head. "That's too simple. There's more to the historical process than that. Look at it from the point of view of the planners; they had to *insure* the physical survival of the *Hope* colony. They wouldn't have a second chance; there was none of this business of 'if Raleigh doesn't make it in Virginia, Lord Baltimore will in Maryland.' But the committee—no one—really knew what we'd find here, so they overstocked us by a factor—as it turned out—of something over six hundred percent. Intentional or not, we were still on a long, rich string to the mother country. The colony could have survived in comfort for a whole generation on what we brought with us."

DiFillipo rose to stretch his legs. He noticed a quick movement of Angleton's hand to his lap, beneath the table, and he realized the gun had disappeared. He realized too that Angleton did not trust him, despite his confidences. He walked to the window and peered out into the dimly lighted Center. "Yeah," he said. "I see what you mean. We'd have all sat around on our goodies until we *had* to get humping, and then it would have been too late. All the expert guys would be dead or too old to do much good."

Angleton nodded, and he relaxed visibly when DiFillipo resumed his seat. "Of course," he continued, "that's still only part of it. When we had completed the planetary survey and come up with a firm estimate of the survival factor on Eleuthera, we fed it into the ship's computer and it told us which Tapes to open each year."

"*Which* Tapes?"

"There are hundreds of variants for each year's Orders Day."

DiFillipo shook his head in astonishment. He began to wonder why he was being told all this.

"So we kept everybody on short rations and an exacting work schedule—as the Tapes specified—and I played at Maximum Leader, and it worked out."

"But why did you keep it up so long? The colony's well established. Was years ago."

"Ah, that's the rest of the story. Look at the old colonies again. Those that were on their own, facing an intensely hostile envi-

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ronment with only marginal resources, tended to adopt a rigid, autocratic social structure; it was the only way they could survive. You can't call a town meeting to vote on how to fight off an Indian raid. Look at New England after a few generations: stagnant, repressive, rigid, a theocratic state in which the individual conformed —or else. Tyranny of a sort was essential to the survival of the early colonists, and at the same time—and this is the important point—it produced almost precisely the same conditions which had led to the colonists' flight from their homeland in the first place. And what happened? The young, the vigorous, the nonconformists, the malcontents, either wound up in the pillory or picked up their marbles and moved west. And the movement didn't stop until there wasn't any more west to move on to. By that time there was enough diversity in the continent to make the social system work until the communications system and too much affluence produced the stagnation of the mid-twentieth century and the wave of revolutionary movements which swept the Americas just before the war."

DiFillipo nodded. He remembered the Pittsburgh riots of '04 with particular vividness. He'd gotten a bad napalm burn in the Hill District.

"So you see," Angleton continued, "there's a direct causal relationship between the circumstances of a colony's establishment and its ability to seed a whole continent—or a planet."

DiFillipo did not yet really understand. "So that's why you pushed us so long; a sort of tyrant for all seasons." He felt vaguely proud of what he thought of as a classical allusion.

"Yes. But it was all programed." There was a slightly defensive note in Angleton's voice. "I did nothing but follow the year-by-year instructions on the Tapes, the Orders Tapes and the Commander's Tapes." He gave a wry, weary shake of the head. "It has been difficult at times. I've had to do things . . ."

"And I screwed up the whole thing for you, huh?"

Angleton shook his head again, this time in impatience. "You still don't understand, do you, DiFillipo. *You* were the payoff. That valley out there and all those families are the payoff. It was all programed."

Understanding, full understanding, rushed in on DiFillipo. He felt himself drowning in understanding. But his face did not show it immediately.

"Figure it out, DiFillipo," said Angleton, a touch of the Old Testament once again in his voice. "Why were you selected? Did you think it was some accident? Did you think the commit-

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tee could make a 'mistake' like that? Figure it out!"

DiFillipo rose and paced to the window again, his body agitated, his mind worrying at the truth like a dog with a rat.

Angleton continued: "Understand. Every successful colony needs a tyrant for a while, sure. But it also needs a rebel, a misfit, a malcontent, a nonconformist, a man willing to take chances, a gambler. The trick was to find one who was psychologically stable at the same time, content to head west without proselytizing. The colony needed a man who could lead people by example, not by some Messianic conviction of his own infallibility. Believe me, there was more time and energy put into your selection than into anyone else's in the colony."

DiFillipo whirled then, his face contorted in anguish, anger and frustration choking him. *"Screw you,* Angleton!" he shouted, all the fear and anger and damaged pride of the past ten years in his voice. *"Screw* you and the Tapes and the goddamn committee!" He rushed then through the door, down the long corridor, and out onto the veranda of the administration building. He wanted darkness and a moment alone.

Angleton followed slowly, aware of the younger man's needs. In the dark, on the veranda, DiFillipo was staring off into the dark western sky when Angleton appeared. Without turning to the old man, he asked, pain in his voice: "All programed? The escape and everything?"

"The Tapes had you pegged for a year earlier."

"And the business with the poker games and the still, did the Tapes predict that too?"

"Not that precise incident, of course. But the Tapes had you picked to do something symbolic like that. We were watching you like a hawk from the seventh year on."

DiFillipo was silent for a moment. Then: "And 'No-Name' . . ." It was the first time DiFillipo had used the name of the valley. ". . . was it all programed too?"

"The Tapes were wrong about the number of families at this stage. Last year's Commander's Tape estimated forty families by this time."

DiFillipo stood in silence then for many minutes, his knuckles white on the veranda railing. Finally, he straightened, breathed deeply, and turned to Angleton. "Okay," he said. "I understand. I thought I could break away, but I guess I'm just not smart enough."

Angleton shook his head in the dim light. "You did break away, DiFillipo. You're out of my control. The Tapes can no longer manipulate you. Why do you suppose I've told you all this?"

"I don't know. At first, back

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there in your office, I wanted to run as fast as I could, get back to the valley and pick up the kids and my wife and head on west to the rift area and start again. Is that why you told me, so I would move on?"

"I'm sure that must be on one of the alternate Tapes," said Angleton. "*'Tell the nonconformist that he has conformed in spite of himself, and he will move on, accomplishing one more step in the diaspora.'* But that's not the reason I'm telling you."

"Then why?"

"To make you understand what you must do now."

"So you're still going to try to manipulate me!"

"Yes, I am. But this time with the truth. You're free now, DiFillipo. Free of me and the Tapes and the committee. What you do now is entirely up to you. But, in a way, it always has been so. You've been captive only to your own nature."

DiFillipo grunted. Perhaps Angleton was right, but he needed time to think. There had been too much information, too fast.

"What I mean is this," said the old man. "Given time, your valley will produce a leader, someone against whom others will rebel, someone who will force others to move on and accomplish the next step in the diaspora. But we don't have time to wait for that."

The old man's voice regained its touch of Old Testament fervor: "Think how vulnerable we all are to natural disaster! What would happen if we got hit with an epidemic, some mutated Eleutheran bug? An earthquake? The valley and the colony are only fifty kilometers apart! We haven't got time to wait. We've got to speed up the historical process of the diaspora. Don't you see, DiFillipo? You've got to go back to your valley and play the Maximum Leader there; you've got to kick your baby birds out of their nest the way I *did*!"

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It was long after midnight when Kovac's rotary landed at the lakeside homesite and dropped DiFillipo off. Terry rushed out at the sound of the aircraft and threw herself into her husband's arms.

"Oh, Flip! I've been so worried! What happened?"

"It's a long story, but everything is okay now."

Together, arm in arm, they walked back into the cabin. DiFillipo poured himself a stiff drink, and they sat in the warm central room, and he told Terry everything he had learned. Telling helped. He was able to overcome his sense of sick disappointment, and as he looked around the rustic room, at the bright autumn leaves in vases, at the boys' crayon drawings on the walls, at the comical collection of all his failures at pottery which lined the mantle, he began to realize that he had not really been manipulated by the Tapes. He had—by his very nature and his selection for the colony—helped write the Tapes himself; they had been a function of *his* personality, not the other way around.

And what he realized, talking to Terry, was that now—free of the Tapes—he could no longer be entirely true to himself. It was a strange paradox, and he hoped he would someday be able to laugh at it.

Just before dawn, weary, they retired. "Tomorrow's going to be a rough day, babe," he said. "I'm going to sleep in a while. But send one of the twins down to Tommy's about noon. I want to see him. I want to tell him that I don't want any more argument on water distribution down-valley. If he doesn't like the way I run things around here, he can damn well pack up and leave any time."

Terry giggled and snuggled up to him in the dark. "Okay, patriarch. He'll be waiting for you when you get up."

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It has been said that modern man is discarding myths ("It is all untrue! Anything goes!"—Neitzsche) and that all authority, aspiration, structure—whatever function you may care to give to mythology—is centered in the individual. Robert Silverberg's stimulating and entertaining story is about a mythless far-future society that calls up the old gods out of the past.

AFTER THE MYTHS WENT HOME

by Robert Silverberg

FOR A WHILE IN THOSE YEARS we were calling great ones out of the past, to find out what they were like. This was in the middle twelves—12400 to 12450, say. We called up Caesar and Antony, and also Cleopatra. We got Freud and Marx and Lenin into the same room and let them talk. We summoned Winston Churchill, who was a disappointment (he lisped and drank too much) and Napoleon, who was magnificent. We raided ten millennia of history for our sport.

But after half a century of this we grew bored with our game. We were easily bored, in the middle twelves. So we started to call up the myth people, the gods and the heroes. That seemed more romantic, and this was one of Earth's romanticist eras we lived in.

It was my turn then to serve as curator of the Hall of Man, and that was where they built the machine, so I watched it going up from the start. Leor the Builder was in charge. He had made the machines that called the real people up, so this was only slightly different, no real challenge to his talents. He had to feed in another kind of data, full of archetypes and psychic currents, but the essential process of reconstruction would be the same. He never had any doubt of success.

Leor's new machine had crystal rods and silver sides. A giant

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emerald was embedded in its twelve-angled lid. Tinsel streamers of radiant platinum dangled from the ebony struts on which it rose.

"Mere decoration," Leor confided to me. "I could have made a simple black box. But brutalism is out of fashion."

The machine sprawled all over the Pavilion of Hope on the north face of the Hall of Man. It hid the lovely flicker-mosaic flooring, but at least it cast lovely reflections into the mirrored surfaces of the exhibit cases. Somewhere about 12570, Leor said he was ready to put his machine into operation.

We arranged the best possible weather. We tuned the winds, deflecting the westerlies a bit and pushing all clouds far to the south. We sent up new moons to dance at night in wondrous patterns, now and again coming together to spell out Leor's name. People came from all over Earth, thousands of them, camping in whisper-tents on the great plain that begins at the Hall of Man's doorstep. There was real excitement then, a tension that crackled beautifully through the clear blue air.

Leor made his last adjustments. The committee of literary advisers conferred with him over the order of events, and there was some friendly bickering. We chose daytime for the first demonstration, and tinted the sky light purple for better effect. Most of us put on our youngest bodies, though there were some who said they wanted to look mature in the presence of these fabled figures out of time's dawn.

"Whenever you wish me to begin—" Leor said.

There were speeches first. Chairman Peng gave his usual light-hearted address. The Procurator of Pluto, who was visiting us, congratulated Leor on the fertility of his inventions. Nistim, then in his third or fourth successive term as Metabolizer General, encouraged everyone present to climb to a higher level. Then the master of ceremonies pointed to me. No, I said, shaking my head, I am a very poor speaker. They replied that it was my duty, as curator of the Hall of Man, to explain what was about to unfold.

Reluctantly I came forward.

"You will see the dreams of old mankind made real today," I said, groping for words. "The hopes of the past will walk among you, and so, I think, will the nightmares. We are offering you a view of the imaginary figures by means of whom the ancients attempted to give structure to the universe. These gods, these heroes, summed up patterns of cause and effect, and served as organizing forces around which cultures could crystallize. It is all very

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strange to us and it will be wonderfully interesting. Thank you."

Leor was given the signal to begin.

"I must explain one thing," he said. "Some of the beings you are about to see were purely imaginary, concocted by tribal poets, even as my friend has just told you. Others, though, were based on actual human beings who once walked the Earth as ordinary mortals, and who were transfigured, given more-than-human qualities, raised to the pantheon. Until they actually appear, we will not know which figures belong to which category, but I can tell you how to detect their origin once you see them. Those who were human beings before they became myths will have a slight aura, a shadow, a darkness in the air about them. This is the lingering trace of their essential humanity, which no mythmaker can erase. So I learned in my preliminary experiments. I am now ready."

Leor disappeared into the bowels of his machine. A single pure note, high and clean, rang in the air. Suddenly, on the stage looking out to the plain, there emerged a naked man, blinking, peering around.

Leor's voice, from within the machine, said, "This is Adam, the first of all men."

And so the gods and the heroes came back to us on that brilliant afternoon in the middle twelves, while all the world watched in joy and fascination.

Adam walked across the stage and spoke to Chairman Peng, who solemnly saluted him and explained what was taking place. Adam's hand was outspread over his loins. "Why am I naked?" Adam asked. "It is wrong to be naked."

I pointed out to him that he had been naked when he first came into the world, and that we were merely showing respect for authenticity by summoning him back that way.

"But I have eaten the apple," Adam said. "Why do you bring me back conscious of shame, and give me nothing to conceal my shame? Is this proper? Is this consistent? If you want a naked Adam, bring forth an Adam who has not yet eaten the apple. But—"

Leor's voice broke in: "This is Eve, the mother of us all."

Eve stepped forth, naked also, though her long silken hair hid the curve of her breasts. Unashamed, she smiled and held out a hand to Adam, who rushed to her, crying, "Cover yourself! Cover yourself!"

Surveying the thousands of onlookers, Eve said coolly, "Why should I, Adam? These people are naked too, and this must be Eden again."

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"This is not Eden," said Adam. "This is the world of our children's children's children's children."

"I like this world," Eve said. "Relax."

Leor announced the arrival of Pan the Goat-footed.

Now, Adam and Eve both were surrounded by the dark aura of essential humanity. I was surprised at this, since I doubted that there had ever been a First Man and a First Woman on whom legends could be based; yet I assumed that this must be some symbolic representation of the concept of man's evolution. But Pan, the half-human monster, also wore the aura. Had there been such a being in the real world?

I did not understand it then. But later I came to see that if there had never been a goat-footed man, there nevertheless had been men who behaved as Pan behaved, and out of them that lusty god had been created. As for the Pan who came out of Leor's machine, he did not remain long on the stage. He plunged forward into the audience, laughing and waving his arms and kicking his cloven hooves in the air. "Great Pan lives!" he cried. "Great Pan lives!" He seized in his arms Milian, the year-wife of Divud the Archivist, and carried her away toward a grove of feather-trees.

"He does me honor," said Milian's year-husband Divud.

Leor continued to toil in his machine.

He brought forth Hector and Achilles, Orpheus, Perseus, Loki, and Absalom. He brought forth Medea, Cassandra, Odysseus, Oedipus. He brought forth Thoth, the Minotaur, Aeneas, Salome. He brought forth Shiva and Gilgamesh, Viracocha and Pandora, Priapus and Astarte, Diana, Diomedes, Dionysus, Deucalion. The afternoon waned and the sparkling moons sailed into the sky, and still Leor labored. He gave us Clytemnestra and Agamemnon, Helen and Menelaus, Isis and Osiris. He gave us Damballa and Guede-nibo and Papa Legba. He gave us Baal. He gave us Samson. He gave us Krishna. He woke Quetzalcoatl, Adonis, Holger Dansk, Kali, Ptah, Thor, Jason, Nimrod, Set.

The darkness deepened and the creatures of myth jostled and tumbled on the stage, and overflowed onto the plain. They mingled with one another, old enemies exchanging gossip, old friends clasping hands, members of the same pantheon embracing or looking warily upon their rivals. They mixed with us, too, the heroes selecting women, the monsters trying to seem less monstrous, the gods shopping for worshipers.

Perhaps we had enough. But

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Leor would not stop. This was his time of glory.

Out of the machine came Roland and Oliver, Rustum and Sohrab, Cain and Abel, Damon and Pythias, Orestes and Pylades, Jonathan and David. Out of the machine came St. George, St. Vitus, St. Nicholas, St. Christopher, St. Valentine, St. Jude. Out of the machine came the Furies, the Harpies, the Pleiades, the Fates, the Norns. Leor was a romantic, and he knew no moderation.

All who came forth wore the aura of humanity.

But wonders pall. The Earthfolk of the middle twelves were easily distracted and easily bored. The cornucopia of miracles was far from exhausted, but on the fringes of the audience I saw people taking to the sky and heading for home. We who were close to Leor had to remain, of course, though we were surfeited by these fantasies and baffled by their abundance.

An old white-bearded man wrapped in a heavy aura left the machine. He carried a slender metal tube. "This is Galileo," said Leor.

"Who is he?" the Procurator of Pluto asked me, for Leor, growing weary, had ceased to describe his conjured ghosts.

I had to request the information from an output in the Hall of Man. "A latter-day god of science," I told the Procurator, "who is credited with discovering the stars. Believed to have been an historical personage before his deification, which occurred after his martyrdom by religious conservatives."

Now that the mood was on him, Leor summoned more of these gods of science, Newton and Einstein and Hippocrates and Copernicus and Oppenheimer and Freud. We had met some of them before, in the days when we were bringing real people out of lost time, but now they had new guises, for they had passed through the mythmakers' hands. They bore emblems of their special functions, and they went among us offering to heal, to teach, to explain. They were nothing like the real Newton and Einstein and Freud we had seen. They stood three times the height of men, and lightnings played around their brows.

Then came a tall, bearded man with a bloodied head. "Abraham Lincoln," said Leor.

"The ancient god of emancipation," I told the Procurator, after some research.

Then came a handsome young man with a dazzling smile and also a bloodied head. "John Kennedy," said Leor.

"The ancient god of youth and springtime," I told the Procurator. "A symbol of the change of seasons, of the defeat of winter by summer."

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"That was Osiris," said the Procurator. "Why are there two?"

"There were many more," I said. "Baldur, Tammuz, Mithra, Attis."

"Why did they need so many?" he asked.

Leor said, "Now I will stop."

The gods and heroes were among us. A season of revelry began.

Medea went off with Jason, and Agamemnon was reconciled with Clytemnestra, and Theseus and the Minotaur took up lodgings together. Others preferred the company of men. I spoke a while with John Kennedy, the last of the myths to come from the machine. Like Adam, the first, he was troubled at being here.

"I was no myth," he insisted. "I lived. I was real. I entered primaries and made speeches."

"You became a myth," I said. "You lived and died and in your dying you were transfigured."

He chuckled. "Into Osiris? Into Baldur?"

"It seems appropriate."

"To you, maybe. They stopped believing in Baldur a thousand years before I was born."

"To me," I said, "you and Osiris and Baldur are contemporaries. You are of the ancient world. You are thousands of years removed from us."

"And I'm the last myth you let out of the machine?"

"You are."

"Why? Did men stop making myths after the twentieth century?"

"You would have to ask Leor. But I think you are right: your time was the end of the age of mythmaking. After your time we could no longer believe such things as myths. We did not *need* myths. When we passed out of the era of troubles, we entered a kind of paradise where every one of us lived a myth of his own, and then why should we have to raise some men to great heights among us?"

He looked at me strangely. "Do you really believe that? That you live in paradise? That men have become gods?"

"Spend some time in our world," I said, "and see for yourself."

He went out into the world, but what his conclusions were I never knew, for I did not speak to him again. Often I encountered roving gods and heroes, though. They were everywhere. They quarreled and looted and ran amok, some of them, but we were not very upset by that, since it was how we expected archetypes out of the dawn to act. And some were gentle. I had a brief love affair with Persephone. I listened, enchanted, to the singing of Orpheus. Krishna danced for me.

Dionysus revived the lost art of making liquors, and taught us to drink and be drunk.

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Loki made magics of flame for us.

Taliesin crooned incomprehensible, wondrous ballads to us.

Achilles hurled his javelin for us.

It was a season of wonder, but the wonder ebbed. The mythfolk began to bore us. There were too many of them, and they were too loud, too active, too demanding. They wanted us to love them, listen to them, bow to them, write poems about them. They asked questions—some of them, anyway—that pried into the inner workings of our world, and embarrassed us, for we scarcely knew the answers. They grew vicious, and schemed against each other, sometimes causing perils for us.

Leor had provided us with a splendid diversion. But we all agreed it was time for the myths to go home. We had had them with us for fifty years, and that was quite enough.

We rounded them up, and started to put them back into the machine. The heroes were the easiest to catch, for all their strength. We hired Loki to trick them into returning to the Hall of Man. "Mighty tasks await you there," he told them, and they hurried thence to show their valor. Loki led them into the machine and scurried out, and Leor sent them away, Heracles, Achilles, Hector, Perseus, Cuchulainn, and the rest of that energetic breed.

After that many of the demonic ones came, and said they were as bored with us as we were with them, and went back into the machine of their free will. Thus departed Kali, Legba, Set, and many more.

Some we had to trap and take by force. Odysseus disguised himself as Breel, the secretary to Chairman Peng, and would have fooled us forever if the real Breel, returning from a holiday in Jupiter, had not exposed the hoax. And then Odysseus struggled. Loki gave us problems. Oedipus launched blazing curses when we came for him. Daedalus clung touchingly to Leor and begged, "Let me stay, brother! Let me stay!" and had to be thrust within.

Year after year the task of finding and capturing them continued, and one day we knew we had them all. The last to go was Cassandra, who had been living alone in a distant island, clad in rags.

"Why did you send for us?" she asked. "And, having sent, why do you ship us away?"

"The game is over," I said to her. "We will turn now to other sports."

"You should have kept us," Cassandra said. "People who have no myths of their own would do well to borrow those of others, and not just as sport. Who will comfort your souls in the dark times ahead? Who will guide your spirits when the suffering begins? Who will ex-

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plain the woe that will befall you? Woe! Woe!"

"The woes of Earth," I said gently, "lie in Earth's past. We need no myths."

Cassandra smiled and stepped into the machine. And was gone.

And then the age of fire and turmoil opened, for when the myths went home, the invaders came, bursting from the sky. And our towers toppled and our moons fell. And the cold-eyed strangers went among us, doing as they wished.

And those of us who survived cried out to the old gods, the vanished heroes.

Loki, come!
Achilles, defend us!
Shiva, release us!
Heracles! Thor! Gawain!

But the gods are silent, and the heroes do not come. The machine that glittered in the Hall of Man is broken. Leor its maker is gone from this world. Jackals run through our gardens, and our masters stride in our streets, and we are made slaves. And we are alone beneath the frightful sky. And we are alone.

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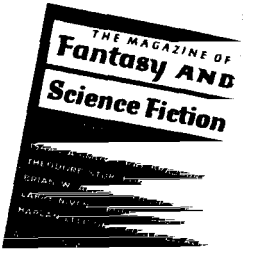

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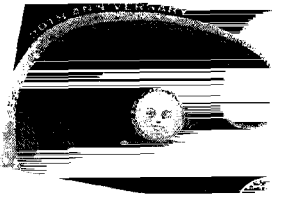

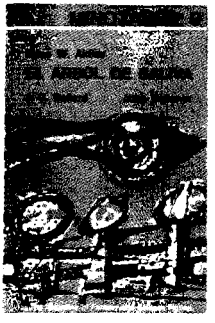

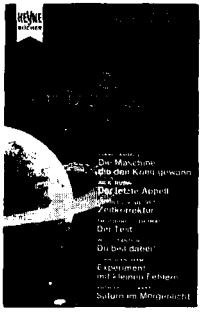

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